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Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal
under the aegis of Sri Jagadguru
Mahasamsthanam Dakshinam-
ur Peetham, Sringeri 577 139, Kar-

is issued bimonthly from Bombay
e, August, October, December, and

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are welcome. All articles published in
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तत्त्वं जिज्ञासमानानां लोकानां प्रीतिमावहन् ।
तत्त्वालोको विजयतां शारदा दयया सदा ॥

*May Tattvāloka always excel, by the
grace of Sarada, delighting the
seekers of Truth.*

H.H. Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamigal

Next Issue:
His Holiness Sri
Chandrasekhara Bharati

Published by T. R. Ramachandran for Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal Education Trust
FROM 125-A, MITTAL COURT, NARIMAN POINT, BOMBAY-400 021 AND PRINTED BY HIM AT TYPOGRAPHIC,
B-26, ROYAL INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, NAIGAUM CROSS ROAD, BOMBAY-400 031, INDIA.



Tattvāloka

THE SPLENDOUR OF TRUTH

VOLUME XV No.2 JUNE/JULY 1992
Mittal Court, Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021

Founder

Sri Abhinava Vidyatirtha Mahaswamigal

Patron-in-Chief

Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Sringeri
Bhadracharya Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamigal

Editor/Publisher: T. R. Ramachandran
Consultants:

Singh, New Delhi

Thorat, M. V. B. S. Sarma,

Patil, Prem Daswani,

Patil, V. Vedanarayanan, Bombay

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Chen, S. Krishnaswamy, Bangalore

Chandran, Mysore

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Chandana Saraswati, Paris, France

Editor: P. R. Subbaraman, Bombay

Consultant: Brendan Pereira

Liaison: V. Panchapakesan (5329288),

Chandana (5249276), Hong Kong

Chandana (2215800), Singapore

Chandaram, NSW (02-6428537) Australia.

Chandani (201-784-9428), New York, USA

Chandana (01-370-2255), London, UK

Subscription: Rs.115 annual. Single copy Rs. 20

(airmail): US\$25 annual.

Subscriptions payable to: Tattvāloka

Tattvāloka

Mittal Court, Nariman Point

400 021, India.

In case of change of address, please enclose the
portion of your Tattvāloka wrapper.

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(190)



Sparks of Wisdom

*

Such the Brahman's mighty power,
but greater still the Person here.
Just a quarter is all beings,
quarters three the gods up there.
Chandogya Upanishad

Formless is the Person bright,
within and yet outside the soul;
Anterior to both life and mind,
unborn, the Transcendental Goal.
Mundaka Upanishad

The Person of a thumb in size
within one's very self abides;
The Lord of past and of future,
from Him, when once he's
known, none hides

This verily is That.

This person of a thumb in size,
is like a light with smokeless ray;
The Lord of past and of future
exists tomorrow and today.
This verily is That.

Katha Upanishad



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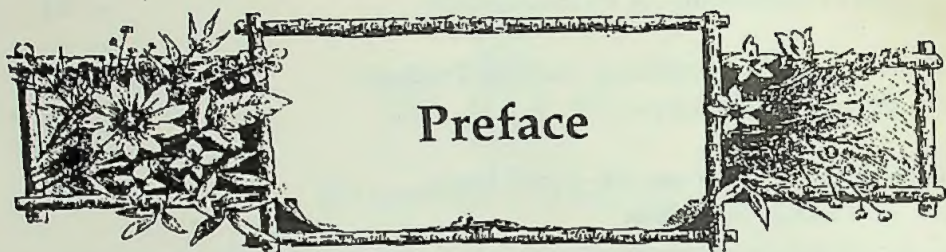
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Among the ten avataras of Vishnu, Lord Narasimha is known to be the most unusual in form and character. The body is that of a human being but the head is leonine. He appears ferocious and awe-inspiring in most figures, though he is also benign in some forms specially when he appears with Lakshmi or Prahlada.

The story of the incarnation is described in Srimad Bhagavata which is the primary source. It is connected with the well-known devotion of Prahlada and the enmity of his father Hiranyakasipu towards Lord Vishnu. Because of the curious boon of Brahma to Hiranyakasipu, the Lord had to assume this strange form to destroy the demon king.

Dr. Varadachari Sadagopan, who has provided a number of articles to this issue, describes the main story as it has been depicted in the Bhagavata. T. V. Anantharamaseshan gives different versions of the episode according to different Puranas, and also an enlightening interpretation of what "lion-man", "pillar", "nail" and other incidents mean in terms of spiritual symbolism.

Dr. Vanamala Parthasarathy, besides giving Puranic narratives, has also mentioned details about some of Narasimha images as prescribed by the Agamas.

Indira Aiyar has shown how the figure of Lord Narasimha has been depicted in different forms from the early Gupta or just the pre-Gupta period. She has referred to the Upanishadic and Puranic literature which became the source material for the religious cult around Lord Narasimha and mentions that the popularity of the cult was well-established by the 6th and 7th centuries A. D., specially in the south of India.

She describes the well-known Nava Narasimhas associated with the Ahobila Hill, Andhra Pradesh, which is supposed to be the original site where Lord Narasimha appeared. R. K. Seshadri also refers to the nine

forms of Lord Narasimha found at Ahobila, among which the Lakshmi Narasimha and Yoga Narasimha (in meditation) are quite common.

A pictorial study of images of Narasimha reinforces the findings of the two authors, and gives both in words and pictures the forms in which Lord Narasimha is worshipped. Dr. Varadachari Sadagopan, in his two articles on temples in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, provides in some detail the legends and the poetry of the Azhwars surrounding the temples.

Lord Narasimha had to be propitiated by Prahlada after the death of Hiranyakasipu. M. V. B. S. Sarma in his article provides a glowing account of the numerous qualities and glories of the Lord, which Prahlada recounts in his praise.

Adi Sankara composed a special stotra, called Lakshmi Narasimha Karunarasa Stotra, which is also an eulogy of Lord Narasimha. (It is given in Part Three). The circumstances in which the stotra was evoked are given in the article on "Grace of Bhagavan Narasimha". It describes two precarious situations in which Lord Narasimha came to bless and save the life of Adi Sankara.

Later Acharyas of Sri Sarada Pitham, Sringeri, have composed hymns on Lord Narasimha. A pentad of verses by H. H. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati, the 34th pontiff and another 18 slokas by his guru, H. H. Sri Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati also find a place in Part Three because of their richness of meaning and beauty of composition.

P. D.



Sudarsana Narasimha



H. H. Sri Bharati Tirtha Mahaswamigal
Jagadguru Speaks....

Bhagavan Narasimha

Narasimha *avatara* (incarnation) is one of those the Lord took to destroy the wicked and protect the good.

When the demon king Hiranyakasipu was a source of untold miseries to the people, Bhagavan Narasimha killed the demon and protected the world.

Another special feature of Narasimha *avatara* is that the Lord proved that he is everywhere. When Prahlada said that the Lord is present in all places, his father Hiranyakasipu asked him if he was also present in the pillar in front. And Prahlada affirmed it. Immediately Lord Narasimha came out of the pillar and proved Prahlada right.

The *Sankara Vijaya* points out that Adi Sankara had specially praised Bhagavan Narasimha. It is also said that Narasimha saved Adi Sankara from some critical situations.

There is also an *Adhyatmic* interpretation of the incarnation of Narasimha. When he killed the demon by using his claws, it is evident that ignorance is destroyed in the same way by knowledge. If one has to understand *Atma tattva*, ignorance has to be rooted out and this can happen only through the *upadesa* of the guru.

If one takes Lord Narasimha as his guru, then ignorance will be destroyed and wisdom will dawn on him.

प्रमाण नख निर्भिन्न महामोहामरारये ।

नमस्कुर्मो नृसिम्हाय स्वप्रकाश चिदात्मने ॥

Part One

Narasimha Avatara in Bhagavata

DR. VARADACHARI SADAGOPAN

*The mercy of the Lord knows no bounds--he takes
the form of a man-lion to protect his devotee
and slay the enemy.*

The incarnation of Mahavishnu as Sri Narasimha or man-lion, is described in the seventh *skandam* of *Srimad Bhagavata*. Sri Suka Brahman describes this auspicious incident to King Parikshit.

Hiranyakasipu was angry at Hari because he had killed his brother Hiranyaksha during Hari's incarnation as the magnificent wild boar. Hiranyakasipu wanted to settle his score with Hari. He went to the forest and did a mighty penance beseeching the grace of Brahma.

During that time, Indra put Hiranyakasipu's wife in prison. She was pregnant then with Prahlada. Sage Narada blessed her with *Narayana Mantra* in the prison. Prahlada heard this *mahamantra* while he was in the womb of his mother. He thus became a devout devotee of Hari even as an embryo.

Brahma's Boon

Meanwhile, Hiranyakasipu was blessed by Brahma. He asked the creator for a boon that would give him freedom from death by humans

or animals; that he should not be killed by animate or inanimate weapons, and that he should not meet his death inside the house or outside. He wanted the assurance that he could not be killed on earth or in air, neither at night or during the day. All of the conditions associated with the boon he sought were clever and Brahma acceded to his wish and gave him the blessings that he sought.

Hiranyakasipu's deep desire was to kill Hari under the protection of Brahma's boons. At the end of his successful penance, Hiranyakasipu returned to his kingdom and issued an order that no citizen of his kingdom should offer worship to Hari and that they should all worship him instead. The citizens out of fear obeyed the king's order.

One day, the king seated his son on his lap and then asked him to tell him the essence of what he learned at his school that day. Prahlada said that the essence of the learning was to offer unceasing service to Hari.

The king flew into a rage on hearing this and sent his son back to his teachers and threatened them to teach his son the need to obey the king and not Hari.

Narada's Blessing

Prahlada however was blessed through sage Narada, while he was still an embryo and therefore he persisted in stating that no one was superior to Hari. He elaborated further the nine modes of worship to his irate father as listening to Hari's glory, singing his divine attributes, thinking of him ceaselessly, offering service to him, worshipping him with *tulsi* leaves, prostrating before him, surrendering to him, befriending him and saluting him.

Prahlada added fuel to the fire of his father by stating that he himself was following the nine modes of devotion to Hari. The king threatened him once again to abandon his unacceptable devotion to Hari. Prahlada refused. The mad father instructed his servants to kill his son by poisoning him, throwing him from the mountain top, commanding an elephant to step on Prahlada's head, sending poisonous snakes to bite him, or anything to do away with him.

All of these efforts to kill Prahlada came to naught. The poison did not work, the snakes were lifted by Garuda, the King of the ocean received Prahlada in great honour and returned him with no harm. *Hiranyakasipu* was paranoid with rage and asked his son to explain the secret behind his invulnerability. Prahlada said Hari, who is

anywhere and everywhere, protected him. The outraged father made fun of his son and asked whether Hari was in the palace pillar just in front of him. When Prahlada affirmed it, the king hit the pillar with his hand and asked the hiding Hari to come out.

Immediately, the greatest roar deafening the world was heard and Hari appeared in the form of a man-lion. His head had the appearance of a fierce lion and his trunk was that of a man with lion's claws in his fingers. He chased the running *Hiranyakasipu* and laid the frightened *Hiranyakasipu* on his lap and tore his chest and intestines apart with his claws and killed him for all of his offences.

Ingenious Scheme

Bhagavan Narasimha devised an ingenious scheme to overcome the protection that Brahma had conferred on *Hiranyakasipu* through his earlier boon. By becoming a man-lion, he was neither a man nor an animal; he killed him at dusk, which was neither day nor night. He killed him on the doorstep, which was betwixt the inside and the outside of the house. He killed *Hiranyakasipu* with the weapon of his nails, which is neither animate nor inanimate. Nail is animate in the sense it grows; when it is cut, it becomes inanimate. Hence, Bhagavan Narasimha chose his nail as the material of the weapon and did not breach the boon of Brahma.

After destroying the evil *Hiranyakasipu*, Narasimha asked his dear devotee Prahlada to come near and queried him about the

boon of his choice. The wise child replied that he did not want anything other than eternal service to Bhagavan Narasimha. Prahlada was then praised by Narasimha as his supreme devotee.

Role Model

Saint Thyagaraja Swamigal has

composed an opera to celebrate the illustrious *bhakti* of Prahlada. The title of this opera following the description of *Bhagavata* is "*Prahlada Bhakta Vijayam*." Saint Thyagaraja considered Prahlada as his role model for the supreme most devotee of Hari.

Narasimha in Kambaramayana

It is not necessary or usual for the *Ramayana* in any of its versions to deal with the incarnation of Vishnu as Narasimha, but Kamban's *Ramayana* in Tamil is an exception. In the *Yuddha Kanda* of this epic, there are 176 stanzas in the third part (*padalam*) describing the Narasimha *avatara* and the killing of Hiranyakasipu.

Departing from Valmiki's original *Ramayana*, with which Kamban was very familiar, having heard it expounded in great detail when he was composing his own work, Kamban has introduced these stanzas, in the form of Vibhishana's advice to his brother Ravana, explaining the glory and attributes of Vishnu as Narasimha and warning Ravana of an end similar to Hiranyakasipu's, if he persisted in his folly.

Kamban's masterpiece was uncompromisingly theistic and he was in all probability familiar with the references to the Narasimha *avatara* in the works of the Alwars. His purpose in describing the Narasimha *avatara* is to glorify the nature and omnipotence of God, in the words of Prahlada, addressed to Hiranyakasipu. The most famous stanza in this part can be freely rendered in English as follows.

"The Lord is present not only in the pillar, which you have pointed out to me, but in any small measure, in the hundredth part of an atom, if you split it, also in the big mountain known as Meru and in the very words, which you have just now spoken."

Narasimha's Acclaim

Kamban, as is well-known, encountered several obstacles in launching his epic, by expounding it before an audience of scholars in the Srirangam temple. One of the objections, which he had to answer was that he was not faithful to the original *Ramayana* of Valmiki and that the introduction of some extraneous matter, not relevant to the epic, was a flaw.

According to the tradition, which is still preserved in the Srirangam temple, this objection was conclusively answered by Lord Narasimha himself. He acclaimed the recitation of this part of Kamban's *Ramayana*, by the vigorous motions of his head and hands from the picture of himself as Mettu Alagiyasingar on the wall of the *mandapam* in which the epic was being expounded.

This story may be apocryphal. But it illustrates the deep veneration, in which Narasimha is held, both in sacred and secular literature in Tamil.

R. K. Seshadri

Narasimha Tattva

T. V. ANANTARAMASESHAN

The imagery drawn through the stories from Puranas provides symbolic meaning of the Narasimha avatara.

Puranas are supposed to expound the essence of Vedic truths. But in their picturisation and similes, they apparently deviate from truth. The Vedas do not speak of form and therefore do not refer to temples. They are rich in imagery which is presented in the *Puranas* through stories of God's exploits. This is particularly clear from the Narasimha episode.

The episode itself differs between one *Purana* and another. In *Matsya Purana*, it is not the lion-man but lion itself that arrives at Hiranyakasipu's court hall and kills him. In the *Vishnu Purana* and *Matsya Purana*, there is specific mention about Hiranyakasipu making peace with his son realising his invincibility as also his right of succession. He is said to have been in power for some years after which, says the *Vishnu Purana*, he is killed by Narasimha. Why? No one knows.

The *Matsya Purana* also speaks of the reconciliation and the crowning of Prahlada as Yuvaraja. One day, a lion arrives at the *darbar* hall. Hiranyakasipu asks Prahlada as to what it is and why it has come there.

The son gives an emotional description of the lion as containing the worlds in *viswaroopa* form. Hiranyakasipu laughs at him and tries to fust the lion and gets killed.

Allegorical Story

The Veda says, "*Prahlado vai kayadhavaha*." *Kaya* is today. *Dhava* is husband. He who husbands the today and goes after material pleasures misses *prahlada* or bliss. Such a person is *kayadhava*. But one who does not husband the body-- who is *kaya adhava* gets *prahlada* or Bliss.

This idea has given rise to the allegorical story of a person named Prahlada. In the story, Kayadhu is his mother and so he is Kayadhava. He has a father named Hiranyakasipu and an uncle by name Hiranyaksha. They were *kaya dhavas* or those that husbanded their bodies. Their names spell the truth. *Hiranya* is gold, *kasipu* is bed, hence Hiranyakasipu is one revelling in the bed of gold, that is in material pleasures. *Aroha* added to *Hiranya* means one whose eye (obsession) is wealth. They were denied bliss. The truth about the uselessness of

material things can be clarified only by a Narasimha or *Narashreshtha*. *Simha*, *Rushabha* and *Sardoola* added to *Nara* signify excellence in a human being.

Hiranyakasipu, in the legend, was master of all the worlds. But he felt insecure. His logic told him that the worlds should be reposing in God--*Naranam ayana*. But his ego would not permit him to recognise it. If one is convinced that something does not exist, one should really worry about or go on denying it. But, deep in the mind, the conviction is absent, hence the denial. When any one is at the acme of material endowments, he does not feel the need for God. He denies him therefore.

Destruction of Ego

The chastisement of ego could come only from a Narasimha--a human being, a lion in wisdom. The lion-man is said to have emerged from a pillar. The pillar symbolises the suppressed consciousness. When it split, the consciousness that surfaced that way is identified with the lion-man. Narasimha is reported to have torn open Hiranyakasipu's chest and wrung the heart out. It is a picturesque way of saying that an ego-centred heart was destroyed.

The very elimination of ego makes the person see or merge with light. *Atmaiva putrah*--The son is a projection of the father. In this sense, when ego died and the materialism in Hiranya got eliminated, his spiritualism survived as the symbol of bliss his son was.

Take the boons that Hiranya got--death from living or non-living entities (the nail). When bliss is experienced, the individual is dead to the world outside, though he is alive. He is in the lap of bliss so to say, here Narasimha's lap. The nail is the never-dying quest which ends only with merging with Bliss, that is symbolised by Hiranya being in the lap of Bliss with Bliss plucking out his heart (the source of all desires). Bliss is earned in a condition of time in which there is neither day nor night which is symbolically *sandhya* or twilight. Being inside the house means being in the womb or taking birth. Leaving his house to be outside it means death. The blissful person in the lap of bliss transcends birth and death.

There is a basic detail which should convince one that the entire episode is unreal. Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha are described as the Jaya and Vijaya in Vaikunta who had been cursed to be born as god's enemies on earth. According to the accepted belief, those who enter Vaikunta are not born again. How come the two attendants of Vishnu could be born thrice?

One myth led to another. The Sanakadis who revelled in the formless obviously suffered a mental corruption, developed a fancy for seeing the infinite with form, and being persons endowed with super intelligence, their desire got vivified as the Vaikuntaloka, its gate keepers, etc. If God creates the worlds by merely willing it, cannot those who have become infinite by being him create worlds?

Symbolic Interpretation

The *dhyana sloka* of Narasimha needs special mention. It speaks of him as abiding in the Milky Ocean (the Ocean of Bliss). He is the personification of *sat*, *chit* and *ananda* (being, consciousness and bliss). He is in yogic pose. He is of a pleasant visage. He is bedecked by thousands of ornaments. (This symbolises the myriad qualities of excellence). He has three eyes (third eye opens for yogis). He has the discus (wheel of time signifying its transcension). He has the bow (the force that bends the mind to go after

levating things). He has the *abhaya* (gesture of fearlessness), *vara* (the capacity to grant boons). He is radiant like the sun (symbolises radiant wisdom). Adishesha is his umbrella (signifying his control over sensory perceptions). His face is moon-like (pleasant to behold). He is the excellent one among men with real wealth (Lakshmi of realisation).

T. V. Anantharamaseshan, formerly an Assistant Editor of the Hindu, is an adept in agama, silpa, and jyotisha sastras.

Simhachalam

The temple of Simhachalam, one of the popular abodes of Narasimha, is located on a hill about 16 km. north of Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh. The main deity here is Varaha Narasimha, a combination of man-lion and boar incarnations of Vishnu. He is also known as Simhadri Appanna. The principal icon is covered with an unguent of sandal paste giving the appearance of a big sandalwood *linga*.

On the third day in the first half of the month of *Vaishaka*, also described as *akshaya trithiya*, the paste is removed early in the morning. The original form of the deity is presented before the devotees. At dusk the paste is applied again.

The *nijarupa* consists of the deity in a standing *tribhanga* posture, with only two hands, head of a boar, and the tail of a lion with human torso.

This special festival is referred to as *chandana yatra*. It is said that 12 maunds of sandal paste are made use of. However, the entire amount is not applied on one occasion but on three other days, besides the above day, namely on *Narasimha Jayanti*, *Ashadha Suddha Purnima* and *Jyeshtha Suddha Purnima*.

The *sthala puranam* of this temple includes Simhachalam as one of the four holy abodes dedicated to Narasimha, the others being Ahobilam, Kritasaucham, Harapapam. According to the traditional accounts, Prahlada was saved by Narayana at this place when his father had ordered his servants to throw him into the sea near this mount Simhadri.

In response to Prahlada's prayers the Lord appeared in the form which combined the earlier Varaha *avatara* and that of Narasimha which he was going to assume to kill Hiranyakasipu.

Dr. (Mrs.) Vanamala Parthasarathy

Prahlada's Laud on Narasimha

M. V. B. S. SARMA

*After the slaying of Hiranyakasipu, no god or man
could pacify Lord Narasimha, except Prahlada
who addressed the Lord with this prayer.*

In the portrait gallery of the devotees of the Divine, Prahlada takes a prominent place. Steeped in love for the Lord which knew no dimensions, he was absolutely fearless. When Hiranyakasipu seething with anger like a trampled serpent asked him, "By whose might, you are defying my authority, you fool when the three worlds along with their guardians shake before me with fear?"

Prahlada answered thus, "My strength is dependent on the Lord, who is your strength too. It is he who has the sway over everything, animate and inanimate. He is the ruler supreme. He is the time element, the embodiment of all mental and organic powers, the supreme controller over the three modes of nature. It is he who creates, protects and lastly destroys.

"Some claim to have conquered the three worlds. But could they conquer the enemy that takes away their senses? There can be no enemy other than ignorance, in the eyes of the wise."

Challenge to the Lord

Hiranyakasipu was outraged

and said, "Evidently you wish to die. It is only those who have a death-wish that prattle. Where is that Lord you mention? I see no Lord other than me. If you say he is everywhere, why do I not see him in this pillar? I shall sever your head. Let me see who will protect you." Saying so, Hiranyakasipu sprang from his seat, withdrew his sword, and knocked the pillar with his fist.

The pillar crashed with a terrific sound. A strange creature with the form of a man-lion emerged. It had a cavernous mouth, erect ears, multitude of arms, and bared claws.

The demon assailed this creature with his mace with tremendous force. But the man-lion caught him, placed him on his thighs at the entrance of the hall, tore his stomach, and wore the entrails as a garland. The earth was shaken to its foundation. Nobody dared to approach the dreaded figure.

After the extinction of the demon, the celestials went wild with joy. They sent down showers of flowers. Brahma, Indra, Lord Siva, the Sun and Maruts, the *yakshas*, *kinnaras*, *apsaras*, and hosts of

other divine denizens, approached Narasimha with folded hands and remained at a distance. They eulogised him individually. Yet they dared not go near him.

Prahlada's Prayer

To appease his anger, the gods sent Sri, the goddess of beauty and wealth. But Sri too did not dare to go near. Brahma then asked Prahlada, who was standing close by, to approach the Lord. When Prahlada prostrated before the Lord, he was moved to pity. He raised him and placed his hand on his head. With this act of benediction, all his dormant desires vanished. The direct knowledge of the Supreme was revealed to him instantaneously. His hair stood on end. Tears of joy welled in his eyes. With a voice choked with emotion and his eyes fixed on him, he began to pray as follows:

"When celestials, saints, gods, contemplative souls and wise men devoted to knowledge, virtue and asceticism fail to propitiate you, O Lord, how can you be pleased with me born of a cruel clan?

Wealth, beauty, askesis, learning, lustre, wisdom, intelligence, endeavour, will be of no avail to propitiate you. For you have been pleased with the elephant (Gajendra) devoid of all these virtues, but devoted to your feet.

Redemption of the Soul

I would consider even a dog eater to be superior to the high-born, if he has dedicated his mind, word, actions, wealth and life to your service. If one is filled with pride, how can he hope for redemption of his

soul, much less his race?

The all-merciful Lord sated with his own blissful Self does not covet any honour at the hands of his devotee. If he does, it is for the devotee's sake only. Whatever the devotee does to the Lord, it rebounds manifold.

Therefore, my fear is gone. I celebrate the Lord with all my understanding. By such an act, even I, the lowliest of the lowest, fallen in a whirlpool of nescience, will undoubtedly be purified.

These gods and others are indeed your devotees. They cherish you with love. They hold you in faith. Yet they are afraid of you, an embodiment of pure *sattva*! We, the demons, strangely look upon you as our enemy! O Lord! All your delightful descents are meant for the well-being of the world as also to lead us to final beatitude.

I beseech you to hold your anger. Its purpose is served. The demon is slain, and all the worlds are now secure. Why then be angry now?

As for me, I have no fear. Your weird form, frightful countenance, lolling tongue, dazzling eyes, fierce teeth, intimidating frown, crimsoned mane, erect ears, fangs and claws, garland of intestines and blood-curdling roar--they do not terrify me.

But one thing, O lover of the miserable, terrifies me out of all my wits. That is the terrible suffering caused by the cycles of transmigration (*samsara*). I am bound by good and evil and their consequences. When will you call me to your feet, the abode of repose?

In this eternal cycle of births and deaths, I am scorched by the fire of grief. Is there a medicine for my grief? How long shall I wander there? When will you bestow on me the inestimable servitude of your feet?

Rare Privilege

Blessed by you with the rare privilege of your service, in fellowship with enlightened souls who have sought refuge at your feet, I shall be rid of attachment. Remembering your name, I shall tide over all calamities. The Creator himself has sung your glories, yes, the glories of my friend and beloved deity.

O Narasimha! The parents are no protectors. The medicine is no medicine for the ailing. The ship is no saviour for the drowning. In many cases they are known to fail. At best they are palliatives. The only security in this world that man can find is yourself, the unfailing support at all times.

In this world, whatever is produced or transformed, with whatever instrument or motive or source, it is all your doing—you are the prompter and none else.

Cosmic Bliss

Maya, the primordial force, has three attributes—*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. When *Maya* is thrown into the time spirit which is the creative will of Cosmic Bliss, the subtle body consisting of mind evolves. This is a product of *karma*, full of latent desires, constituting the wheel of transmigration with 16 spokes (mind, ten *indriyas* and five subtle elements) provided by beginning-

less nescience. Who can overcome this whirling wheel, O Birthless one, sans your saving grace?

Be propitious O Lord! to me, caught in this wheel of transmigration. This wheel is after all your own creation of illusion. He who binds can also free.

I do not covet the blessings of long life, riches, glory in heaven, which mortals crave. Do I not know how flimsy they are? The angry brow of my father once swept them away in a trice. And thou man-lion hast destroyed such indomitable father of mine, in a twinkling!

Therefore, I do not want sense pleasures. Not mystic powers. Not even the joy of the Creator Brahma. I only ask this. Make me your servant.

The sense pleasures are a mirage. The body is frail. It is a hot bed of disease. It is strange men still hanker after pleasures and are not disgusted.

The notions of high and low can only exist in worldly creatures. Not in you, who is the friend and the soul of the universe. You are like a wish-fulfilling tree. One can have their wishes fulfilled by devoted service. The question of high and low does not arise.

Service of Devotees

How can I give up the service of your devotees? Has not sage Narada accepted me as his own and saved me from a headlong fall into the abyss of metempsychosis due to excessive attachment of worldly pleasures?

Indeed, it is you who constitute this universe. You are in the begin-

ning. You are at the end. It follows that you are in the middle. This cosmos has evolved out of your *Maya*. Having created it, you have entered it as its Inner Controller. Associating with the modes, you appear as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer.

This universe of cause and effect is same as you. Yet you are different from it, as you exist before and after. Essentially the tree is the same as the seed. So is this universe.

By your free will, you withdraw the cosmos into yourself. You repose in the deluge of waters enjoying the bliss which is your nature. Closing your eyes, self absorbed, you exist in your absolute nature. You cognize no *tamas*--a characteristic of deep sleep. Nor the objects of senses which present themselves during wakefulness and dreams.

The time spirit, combined with the three modes, produces this universe. You reposed on your bed Ananta, when your trance came to an end. From your navel sprang a huge lotus like a banyan tree from a tiny seed.

Brahma's Meditation

Brahma, the seer seated on the lotus, failed to perceive anything and could not discover you, the origin. He kept diving into the water for a hundred celestial years. Perched on the lotus he meditated. Purified by the meditation he eventually discovered that in a subtle form you pervaded his whole being.

Assuming the form of Hayagriva, you slew the mighty demons Madhu and Kaitabha, who

snatched away the Vedas from Brahma and were about to kill him. You then restored the Vedas to Brahma.

Thus, you have come several times in your various manifestations, such as Rama, Balarama, the divine boar and fish, dwarf Vamana, sages Nara and Narayana, to maintain the standards of virtue and order.

Like the seed and the sprout, the unmanifest and the manifest are but your two forms, made known by Vedas. There is nothing other than you, who art devoid of form. Through devotion, the controlled in mind are able to see you, like the fire in the pieces of wood.

Neither the *gunas*, nor their presiding deities, can know you. Because of this, men resort to meditation, exclusively. Can a man therefore develop devotion to you, who art the goal of ascetics, except by whole-hearted service, such as salutation, eulogy, worship, service, meditation and listening to your glories?"

When Prahlada thus ended his laud, Narasimha was highly pleased. Though tempted by the Lord, Prahlada respectfully declined to ask for any boon. For he had no hankering. His mind was firmly anchored to the Lord's lotus feet.

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Narasimha Avatara-- Puranic Narratives

DR. VANAMALA PARTHASARATHY

Ferocious in appearance, but full of grace, this incarnation of Vishnu has been the delight of Puranic writers and iconographers.

The saving grace of Vishnu led to his incarnation as Narasimha. The form assumed was that of a man-lion combination, ferocious in appearance. Absorbing details about this *avatara* of Vishnu occur in various *Puranas*.

In *Kurma Purana* it is recounted that after the gods pleaded for help to Vishnu against Hiranyakasipu, the Lord produced a male from him and sent him to kill the *asura*. Initially, Prahlada along with the other sons of Hiranyakasipu opposed the male born of Narayana and even hurled the *Brahma* missile at him. The mighty one caught hold of the sons and flung them. Hiranyakasipu opposed him and hit him on his chest with his leg, which made him return to the abode of Vishnu. It is after this encounter, that Vishnu appeared as Narasimha, looking terrible with teeth and like the fire at the end of *Yuga*.

Prahlada, who was sent, was unable to face Narasimha's unlimited strength, recognised the Lord immediately, and bowed before him.

Even though he persuaded his father not to oppose the Lord, the *asura* fought only to be torn into pieces with nails by Narasimha before the very eyes of Prahlada.

The *Padma* and *Bhagavata puranas*, too, describe the events that led to the Narasimha *avatara*. The *Padma Purana* (Uttara Kanda: 238.16) calls Prahlada a *janma vaishnava*. It also gives details about the severe penance undertaken by Hiranyakasipu, the boons received and the severe combat of the *asura* with Narasimha (I.45). The *Bhagavata Purana* has a number of chapters allotted to this *avatara*. Vishnu had to appear in such a form that would be capable of slaying Hiranyakasipu by overcoming all his boons.

Representations of Narasimha

Texts, such as the *Puranas* and *Agamas*, provide abundant material as to how the manifestation of Vishnu appeared and the manner in which the figure has to be shown.

Descriptions of Narasimha are given in *Agni Purana*, *Narada Purana*

and *Vishnudharmottara Purana*. Agamas, such as *Sattvata*, *Padma Samhita* and others, also provide details.

The *Agni Purana* (49.4) describes a four-armed image of Narasimha with two hands holding discus, mace and the other two engaged in striking the bosom of the *asura*. The same in another verse (49.17) prescribes the discus and conch as the two weapons.

The *Narada Purana* in discussing the worship of Narasimha elaborates on the terrible form of Narasimha on whom one may meditate. He is presented as having the lustre of deadly fire (*kalanala*), wearing the garland of entrails, with serpent as the sacred thread, having five faces each with three eyes, with blue neck and moon for the crest, and is shown as having the form of Rudra. Narasimha with 16 arms is also prescribed for meditation. Besides, a 32 handed deity of the same is described.

The 13 right hands are shown as carrying "discus, lotus, axe, noose, plough share, threshing rod, one hand in the gesture of fearlessness, goad, sword, *pattisa*, *bhindipala*, *mudgara*, and *tomara* (all varieties of iron clubs). The 13 left hands carry conch, iron club, *kheta*, noose, spear, fire, one hand in the gesture of granting boon, the *sakti*, *kundika* (waterpitcher), the bow, and one hand in the *mudra* of threat, *gada*, drum and sieve; with a pair of hands, he should press down the knees and the head of the enemy. With the pair of arms lifted above, he should hold the clusters of

entrails. And with the lower pair of arms, he is described as tearing *asura* Hiranyakasipu."

According to *Vishnudharmottara Purana* (III 78.2), the image should have strong shoulders and neck with a lean middle portion and belly, with the face of a lion and body of human in the *alidha* pose, ripping open the bosom of Hiranyakasipu.

The Agamas also provide profuse details about the image of Narasimha. The *Sattvata Samhita* describes the four-armed figure with a single face, fierce, with conch and discus, and the other two hands in *abhaya* and *varada* gestures.

The *Padma Samhita* says that many kinds of Narasimhamurti can be explained. He is to be depicted with human body and the face of lion with fangs and mouth wide open, with curved eye-brows (revealing his anger) and with three eyes. He is either shown four-armed in the yogic posture, or standing. Sri and Bhu may also be present. The eight-armed and 16-armed are also included with the various weapons.

Brahma, Siva, Prahlada and Garuda may be shown. Further it states that the images should possess a pleasant face (*soumya vaktra*) and have four arms either along with Sri and Bhu or without them. Thus, while the terrible form is often described, there are also the benevolent portrayals of the *avatara*. T. A. Gopinatha Rao in his book "Elements of Hindu Iconography" discusses the various types of Narasimha icons.

From the evidence available, the representation of Narasimha dates to a very early period. The man-lion form occurs from the early Gupta period. His figures are seen from Pallava period (7th Century A.D) onwards in the South. While the early ones are simple with two hands, later they become more

elaborate. Even the combats with narrative details are depicted vividly. Thus the *avatara* was popular from ancient times.

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Awe-inspiring Narasimha

The Narasimha icon in any temple is an awe-inspiring marvel of sculpture and a sermon in stone. The half-man, half-lion incarnation is an unusual form of Maha Vishnu and partly adds to this marvel. If a comprehensive study of ancient Narasimha temple idols is made, it will also throw light on their legendary origin.

The hills of Devarayanadurga near Tumkur (about 80 kms north-west of Bangalore) are known for a pair of Narasimha shrines—of Bhoga Narasimha (Narasimha with Lakshmi) on the hill and Yoga Narasimha, at a higher altitude. An interesting feature of Yoga Narasimha is that a *saligrama* kept in Narasimha's mouth moves freely inside—one can insert a finger and move it, but not pull it out.

The *kshetra* is known as *Vasishta kshetra*, as the origins are attributed to the great *rshi*.

An unusual shrine of Lakshmi Narasimha is located in the well-known Ghati Subramanya, about 30 miles north of Bangalore. Although the temple is named after Subrahmanya, it is, in reality, a two-in-one dual idol of Subrahmanya and Lakshmi Narasimha. The idol facing the east has serpentine form of Subrahmanya while the same idol has Lakshmi Narasimha facing the west. For the benefit of pilgrims and onlookers a mirror is placed behind the idol to enable them to have a full glimpse of the remarkable and eye-catching Narasimha! The idol is *swayambhu*, or self-manifest.

A Different Legend

Namakkal in Tamil Nadu has a different legend of Narasimha. The icon is part of the monolithic rock of the Namakkal hill. Lord Narasimha is said to have assumed the stony form immediately after slaying the Asura king Hiranyakasipu. That there was not much of a time-lag after the killing and the assumption of the *shila* form is evident from two mystic pieces of evidence on the idol.

Firstly, the hands of Narasimha bear the permanent marks of the blood-stain! The impression is an indelible one and still looks fresh. Secondly, the nails of the Lord look equally real in colour and protrusion. A visit to Namakkal to gain first-hand knowledge of the awe-inspiring Narasimha will certainly be more convincing.

V. Suryanarayan

The Grace of Bhagavan Narasimha

*Here are the incidents when Adi Sankara was graced
by Bhagavan Narasimha in times of crisis.*

A fierce and cruel-hearted Kapalika had obtained the consent of Adi Sankara to take Sankara's head for his sacrifice in propitiating Siva to attain Kailasa with his physical body. Finding that his opportune moment had come, the Kapalika came near the Acharya with his sword uplifted to chop off his head, when the whole plot that was developing suddenly flashed in the mind of Sankara's disciple Padmapada, otherwise known as Sanandana.

Seeing on the screen of his heart the picture of the Kapalika approaching the Acharya with uplifted sword and trident, the whole personality of the devoted disciple flared up like a burning mass of fire. Padmapada had attained *siddhi* in the *mantra* of Narasimha, the man-lion incarnation of the Lord, who always removes the sufferings of people who surrender to him.

The consciousness of Narasimha took possession of Padmapada, and he became Narasimha himself for the time being. His human consciousness was gone, and he became an embodiment of ferocity. In that mood he leapt into the sky, driving

away the clouds by the slash of his manes, filling all beings with fear by his thunderous roars, and stunning all, including the gods, with the vigour and speed of his movement.

As the worlds trembled in consternation at this ferocious manifestation of divine power, Padmapada caught hold of the Kapalika while he was aiming his trident at the Acharya's head, and tore open his chest with his nails, as Narasimha had done to Hiranyakasipu. The body that was thus opened with the nails, he lifted up with his projecting molars, and roared again and again. Alarmed by the sound and commotion, the disciples who had gone away for their ablutions hurried back to the *ashrama*, and saw the Acharya in *samadhi* and the corpse of the Kapalika lying nearby.

Padmapada and Narasimha

The disciples now asked Padmapada in great astonishment how the Lord Narasimha happened to be so gracious to him by performing this great deed through him.

Padmapada replied to them smiling, "In my early days, I performed austerities for a very long time in the holy forest on the top of the moun-

tain Bala in order to propitiate Lord Narasimha, who always responds to the whole-hearted devotion of votaries. A hunter who used to pass by was in the habit of asking me, 'O Yogin! Why are you staying alone in this mountain cave?'

"One day I answered him, saying, 'O hunter! I am in quest of that wonderful being who has a human body up to the neck and a lion's face above. He abides in this forest, but I have not yet been able to meet him.' When I had said this much, the hunter went into the forest, and not long after, returned with the Narasimha (man-lion) tied with creepers.

"With a heart filled with astonishment, I asked that divine being, 'Even *Rshis* find it difficult to attain to you. How could this hunter then get you so quickly?' That divine being said, 'Even *Rshis* are not able to concentrate so wholeheartedly on me like this hunter. Even you are not able to do so.' So saying, he disappeared, blessing me."

While the co-disciples of his stood astonished at these words, the luminous Narasimha began to roar once again deafening the worlds. Sankara now came out of his *samādhi*, opened his eyes, and saw standing before him the fierce Narasimha form. His manes of wild growth were white like the moon, while his fierce eyes glowed below his forehead like the sun. He was luminous like a galaxy of suns.

His body was smeared with the blood of the Kapalika whose chest he had torn with his nails. On his

chest was the *Srivatsa* mark, and on his neck, the *Kaustubha* gem along with the entrails of the slain foe. All the worlds were trembling at the sight of him and at the flames of fire issuing out of his mouth like several tongues licking the skies. From the pores of his skin sparks of fire were flying out everywhere.

His face, with teeth grimly pressed, evoked awe even in the minds of Brahma and Siva who called out to him in fear, "O Lord! Be pacified; unleash not the deluge prematurely."

The great Acharya saw before himself the formidable Narasimha form, the movement of whose lolling tongue looked like streaks of lightning darting out in different directions. Without the least sign of fear, he praised him with overflowing devotion.

Saved from Fire

Adi Sankara, the great ascetic, defeated Mandana Misra in a debate, but Ubhaya Bharati, the wife of Mandana, challenged Sankara for a discussion on the science and art of love. Sankara asked for a month's time, and returned to the forest with his disciples. There he saw a body of a king who had just died during a hunting trip.

The Acharya considered that it was an excellent opportunity to enter the king's body, return to the palace, learn all that he needed to know about *Kama Sastra* to answer Ubhaya Bharati's questions and then re-enter his own body. He instructed his disciples to watch over his body, while he entered that of the king. The retinue of the king

were delighted to see their king come alive and returned with him to the palace as if nothing had happened. The disciples hid Adi Sankara's body in a cave and waited for his return in a month's time.

During that month, the land of the king prospered. The wives of the king were extremely happy. Many blessings came the way of the subjects of the land. The ministers realised that all of these auspicious happenings must be due to the entry of a holy man's spirit in the king's body. They decided to prolong the existence of the holy spirit in the body so that the kingdom could continue to benefit from the extraordinary prosperity visited upon it. They gave orders to the soldiers to search for a dead body anywhere in the kingdom and burn it.

The disciples of Acharya rushed to the palace and gave the message

to the Acharya occupying the king's body in a way in which he alone could understand the great danger. Meanwhile, the king's emissaries reached the cave where the Acharya's body was preserved while the disciples on guard were away for their ablutions. They had taken possession of the body, put it on a pyre and just set fire to it, when the Acharya enlivened it. The Acharya recited extempore a great hymn, addressed to Lakshmi Narasimha asking the Lord's hand to save him. (See Part Three). By the grace of Narasimha the fire subsided, and he emerged from the cave as the moon comes out of Rahu's mouth at the end of an eclipse.

*From Madhava Vidyaranya's
Sankara Digvijaya published by
Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.*



Yoga Narasimha (Chola bronze)



Lakshmi Narasimha (Hoysala sculpture)

Part Two

Lord Narasimha: Iconography and Literature

MRS. INDIRA S. AIYAR

Different aspects and forms of Narasimha, portrayed in rich detail in art and literature, testify the appeal and popularity the God has enjoyed with millions of people.

The deity Narasimha is listed both in the *Vyuhas* and the *Vibhavas* of Vishnu. *Vyuha* represents moral qualities of the godhead, such as knowledge, lordship, ability, strength, virility, and splendour. *Vibhavas* are the *avatars*, or incarnations, of the god. As such there is no mention of the *Vyuha* concept in the later Vedic texts, but there is some mention of the *Vibhavas* of god. *Avatara* may be explained as the descent of the god-head on earth in the form of man, animal or bird for a particular purpose. Thus there is a basic distinction between the concept of *Vyuha* and *Vibhava*.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, the syncretisation in the Vaishnava cult of three figures of the human Vasudeva- Krishna, the Vedic sun god Vishnu, and Vishnu-Narayana god of the Brahmanas had already taken place. Vasudeva-Krishna-Narayana was now conceived in five aspects. These are transcendent, emanatory, incar-

natory, immanent, and iconographical images for worship. The image form usually illustrates the first three aspects of the god, and the devotee can find a particular aspect of his *Ishtadevata*.

There are said to be four *Vyuhas*-*Chaturvyuha* or *Chaturmurtis*-of the god. These are Vasudeva, Samkarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. This concept must have been extant in the second century B. C., because Patanjali mentions it in his *Mahabhashya*. This enlarged into 24 during the Gupta period, due to the influence of the *Pancharatra* theology.

Iconographically, these were represented with the central figure of Vishnu, from which the cult derived its name of Vaishnava. These *Vyuha* figures were identical in all manner, except for the subtle arrangement of the emblems of conch, disc, mace and lotus. The most auspicious of the 108 (and later 1008) names were given to these *Vyuhas*. *Rupaman-*

dana, and a few other texts on *silpa*, mention Narasimha as one of the secondary *Vyuhas*. The *Vibhava* or *Avatara* was also an important concept in the *Pancharatra* theology, or the *Bhagavata* creed. The *Bhagavad Gita* clearly states the *Avatara* concept.

The later texts mostly of the *Pancharatra* school fixed the *Avataras* of Vishnu to the well-known 10 incarnations, called the *Dasavataras*. The *Narayaniya* section of the *Mahabharata* refers to Varaha, Vamana, Narasimha, Krishna, Bhargava, Rama and Dasarathi Rama. Though there were differences in the list in the Northern and Southern enumerations, Narasimha was a constant. This is so in the *Purana* literature also. In the early *Pancharatra* text, the *Satvata*, and the later one, the *Ahirbudhnya*, there are 39 names of the *Avataras*. Even in this curious assortment (like Kamatisvara and Piyushaharana), Narasimha is listed. The *Avataras* are divided into primary (*mukhya*) and secondary (*gauna*) ones in the *Pancharatra* texts.

Varied Iconography

The oldest possible representation which could be datable belongs to the early Gupta or just the pre-Gupta period. This is a seal from Basarh. This shows the god in the *lalitasana* pose seated on a high pedestal. His right arm is raised and the left arm rests on his hip. Though the seal is inscribed, it is faint and undecipherable. Because the features of the god are regularised, the cult must have been well-established in this period, and shows its

antiquity. In this period the god was the main deity in the temples, as distinct from his worship in the sub-shrines. The myths relating to this god used to embellish the walls of shrines.

His importance as a cult deity could be assessed, when we see the injunctions laid down for the proportions while making icons. *Matsya Purana* takes *tala* (12 *angulas*), as a measurement, and briefly distinguishes between *dasa tala* and *sapta tala* icons. (*Dasatala* images should be made for Rama Dasarathi, Bali son of Vairochana, Varaha and Narasimha; but Vamana should be made of *sapta tala*).

In Kashmir there is a mutilated figure of Vishnu, belonging to the early medieval period. This figure is *Chaturmurti*; the front face is human and is Vishnu; the right side face is lion's; and the left one boar's. The face at the back is of demoniacal mien. Such composite figures are not common. Over and above the one in the Marthanda temple there are two more, one in Banaras and the other in Mathura.

Vishnudharmottara refers to this figure as Vaikunta. One interesting aspect is that these faces do not represent the *Avataras* of the God, but his *Vyuhas*. They are: on the eastern side is the human face of Vasudeva; on the south, the lion face is Samkarshana, symbolising *jiva*; the face on the north is boar, representing Pradyumna, symbolising *manas*; the *raudra* face on the west represents Aniruddha, symbolising *ahamkara*. The god in such a form is said to sustain the whole world.

The *Vibhavas* (*Avataras*) of Vishnu were sometimes carved in a row on a plaque, and kept in a particular place in the Vishnu temples. The bas-relief in metal or stone was used to adorn the door lintels. There were sometimes subsidiary temples for certain *Avataras*, like Varaha, Narasimha and Vamana. The icons installed in the temple for worship are immovable and are called the Dhruvabera icons. These again can be classified into Yoga, Bhoga, Vira and Abhichara variety. This division is, from the perception of the devotee, for a particular fruition of desires.

The Bhoga type is the most popular variety because it is said to grant the wishes of the devotee. The Abhicharika variety is rare because it is worshipped to kill or stun an enemy. The Narasimha and the Naravaraha were depicted with the face of the animal and a human body with the attributes of Vishnu. The Narasimha icon is also classified as the *Sthauna* form. The significance of this appellation becomes apparent when we remember the Sanskrit name for pillar is *sthuna*. In the representation of Narasimha killing the demon, either the moment of the killing is depicted, or the fight is portrayed.

Normally, the slaying of the demon is shown, almost all over India. If the fight is to be portrayed then *Matsya Purana* has the following stipulations laid down: the participants' legs should be shown inter-locked; the demon should be shown as repeatedly being attacked; and he should be shown to raise his

sword in a weak manner, with the intention to fight albeit feebly. Though it is said that the devotees of Vishnu preferred the *saumya* form of Narasimha called the Kevala Narasimha, where he is portrayed in a peaceful mien, the *ugra* form is prevalent all over India, refuting the above opinion.

In the Gupta era, the Yoga Narasimha is portrayed in many temples. In a window niche in the Deogarh temple, Yoga Narasimha is shown in *Sukhasana*, holding lotus, conch, discus and mace in his hands. Prahlada is shown on the side, adoring the god. Such an icon exists in Badami, and few other Gupta temples. In Halebid, the Yoga Narasimha is shown with his legs slightly raised, but tied with a *yogapatta*.

Belonging to the Vijayanagar kingdom, amongst the Hampi ruins is the mammoth Lakshmi Narasimha figure. We can surmise the goddess' presence by the feminine hand pinching the back of the god as she holds onto him for support. Lakshmi Narasimha figures prominently in the Madras museum bronzes, as also in the cave panel reliefs of the medieval period, in Ellora and Elephanta.

Amongst the *Matris*, there is Narasimhi, *sakti* of god Narasimha. The goddess is depicted with a fierce lion face, mounted on a lion. The fierce mien of the *Matris* is due not to the mounts, but their own nature.

Cult Literature

The *Taittiriya Aranyaka* mentions a Gayatri for Narasimha. In the

later Vedic texts importance is given more to the *laukika* than the Vaidik ones. There are two Upanishads which were the sacred texts of the cult—the *Narasimha Purva Tapaniya Upanishad* and the *Narasimha Uttara Tapaniya Upanishad*. The *Purva Tapaniya Upanishad* is in two parts, both glorifying the *mantraraja* of Narasimha; the second part gives other famous Vaishnavite *mantras* and instructions on how to construct the *Yantra*. The *Uttara Tapaniya Upanishad* also emphasises *mantra japa*, but goes further and identifies the god with the transcendent Brahman, the Atman, and the sacred syllable *Om*.

The popularity of the *Narasimha Upanishads* led to the formulating of other sectarian Upanishads, such as *Ganapati* and *Gopala*. About this period, most probably between 500 and 900 A. D., the *Narasimha Samhita* and the *Narasimha Upapurana* were also composed. This *Upapurana* was translated into Telugu around 1300 A.D.

The cult's unbroken popularity can be traced from the early centuries of the Christian era, right upto the Vijayanagar kingdom. The cult's stability and popularity was as much due to royal patronage as to its dissemination among the masses. The sects which followed Narasimha as their cult deity were well established even in the 6th and 7th centuries, which would put their origin much earlier. The worship of the god seems more popular in the south than in the north, though this would not place the origin of the cult in the south.

Ahobala or Ahobila Hill

The *Nava Narasimhas* said to be mentioned in the *mantraraja* in the *Narasimha Upanishads* are represented in the nine shrines situated on and around the Ahobila hill. The name of the place is derived differently. The *devas* congregated in the skies witnessing the fight between Narasimha and Hiranyakasipu. When the god killed the demon, the *devas* cried out in admiration and awe, "Aho balam! Aho balam!". Alternatively, Garuda is said to have worshipped the god in a cave on the hill, and realised him. Thus the place came to be called Ahobila. The nine shrines to the God are enumerated below.

1. At the foot of the hill itself is the Prahладavarada Narasimha. The Lord is seen blessing his devotee.

2. Some distance from here is the Chatravata Narasimha. The god is installed under a tree and is surrounded by thorny bushes.

3. On top of the hill is the Yogananda Narasimha. After killing Hiranyakasipu the god taught Prahlada the esoterics of yoga here. The sages Gobhila and Bharadwaja had done penance here to expiate their sins.

4. On the southern slopes of the hill the god in his *ugra* aspect is worshipped as Ugra Narasimha.

5. Very near this is the Guha Narasimha, where he is worshipped in a cave. At the entrance to this cave is a huge pillar. It is believed that it is out of the same pillar Narasimha emerged when the arrogant demon kicked it.

6. Some distance from here is the temple of Kroda Narasimha, where the Lord is in the form of a boar. This holy place is said to bestow immense spiritual power to the devotee.

7. At some distance is the shrine of Malola Narasimha, sporting in the company of the divine mother. He is *santa rupa*.

8. Higher up is the Jwala Narasimha, where he actually killed the demon.

9. Nearby is the Pavana Narasimha, where the worship is said to follow the Shakta pattern.

The place is associated with the Chenchu tribes, who are also connected with Sri Sailam. Goddess Lakshmi was born amongst them and while she was living there, the Lord became enamored of her. He married her and lived amongst the tribes very happily. In fact, he was so happy here that he refused to return to Vaikunta!

Royal Patronage

The Kakatiya king Prataparudradeva had donated a golden image of the *Santarupa* form of the god with Lakshmi. This is still worshipped by the Jeeyars of Ahobilam.

Legend has it that Prataparudradeva wanted to

fashion a golden image of Siva in the *linga* form and give it to the Sri Sailam temple. But when he tried to fashion a *linga*, it turned out to be a Narasimha. The king was much agitated and perturbed. In the night, Lord Narasimha appeared in his dreams, and pointed out to him that in reality there was no difference between him and Siva, and they were one and the same. He instructed the king to install his idol in the Ahobila temple, and to worship him there.

To the same deity, king Krishnadevaraya offered a diamond necklace, a wristlet, a golden plate, and a thousand pieces of gold. The great king Vikramaditya of the Western Chalukya of Kalyan (1076-1106 A.D.) was a devotee of the deity. Another ardent devotee of Narasimha was Siladitya VII of the Maitraka dynasty of Valabhi belonging to around 8th century A. D. There is a copper plate inscription bearing witness to the king's devotion.

Indira Aiyar has submitted her thesis for PhD on Durga as Mahishasuramardhani at the Bombay University. She has been associated with the Ananthacharya Indological Research Institute, Bombay, in the preparation of her paper.

Victory be unto you, O Hari, the Lord of the universe. You have indeed crushed the big bee, in the form of Hiranyakasipu, with the wonderful hornlike nail bedecking your lotus-like hand.

Jayadeva in Ashtapadi

The Concept and Image of Narasimha

R. K. SESHADRI

The worship of this deity is popular not only in many forms but also in various places, such as on hills and in pillars. He is, in all, a saviour and protector dispersing boons when prayers are offered.

Among the ten incarnations of Maha Vishnu, the *matsya avatara* or the fish incarnation is not worshipped in any temple. Temples in honour of the next two *avatara*s, namely, *kurma* (tortoise) and *varaha* (boar), are also rare. Vishnu's fourth *avatara* as Narasimha is, however, very popular and there are a number of temples dedicated to him.

The explanation for this is quite simple. The Narasimha incarnation is not sectarian. According to the traditional biographies of Adi Sankara, for example, a mere hunter in a forest was able to have a *darsana* of Narasimha in the form of a man-lion, after a search lasting for a few hours, which he undertook at the instance of Padmapada, one of the disciples of Sankara.

At Ahobilam in the Kurnool district, Narasimha is the god of the local Chenchu tribe, which celebrates an annual festival every year on the hill in his honour and

also in honour of Chenchu Lakshmi, his consort from this tribe. Padmapada himself was a devotee of Narasimha and invoked his assistance for saving Sankara from a Kapalika, who was about to kill him.

On another occasion, Sankara recited the *Lakshmi Narasimha stotra* for saving his body from the scorching fire. What is more Narasimha is regarded as having the *amsa* or power of Rudra. Narasimha icons are, therefore, found in Siva temples and prayers are offered to him in these temples in the morning.

Narasimha Icon

Among Sri Vaishnavites, the Narasimha icon is not regarded as one, which is worshipped exclusively by the Vadagalai or northern school. At Sholingur (Cholasimhapuram or Ghadikachalam) the Narasimha idol has been decorated with the Thengalai *namam* (mark on the forehead) of the southern school; and there are also some other

temples, in which the idol means the same *namam*.

An ever more surprising fact, although it is not generally known, is that in far-off Thailand, which is now predominantly Buddhist, one comes across the name of Narasimha, although it is barely recognisable in the corrupted form of Nimmanheimin, Narasimha is thus a universal god.

It is not surprising, in view of this, that Narasimha has come to be represented in several forms. According to the *Vihagendra Samhita* (4.7) there are 74 forms of the Narasimha icon. Not all of them are, of course, well-known, but nine forms are fairly popular. There is no standard list of nine and the names may vary, depending on one's source of reference. At Ahobilam, the nine forms are: Jwala, Ahobila, Malola (with Lakshmi), Kroia (Varaha), Karanja (with the bow and chakra), Bhargava, Yoga, Chatravada and Bhavana Narasimha. According to another traditional list, we have Maha Narasimha and the Sthanu, Girija, Yoga, Ugra, Kevala, Vira and Jwala forms and, of course, the Bhoga or Lakshmi Narasimha. There may also be some other minor variations.

Among these nine, two are quite common. They are Yoga (in meditation) and Bhoga (with Lakshmi as Lakshmi Narasimha). Others are Ugra (tearing open the breast of Hiranyakasipu), Jwala (ferocious and flaming), Varada (granting a boon to and blessing Prahlada), Sthanu (coming out of the pillar), Sthanaka (standing), Nitya (danc-

ing) and Kevala (seated alone in a special Yoga posture, with one leg raised above the other).

Narasimha, according to the *Vaikhanasa Agama*, can be worshipped with Lakshmi as Lakshmi Narasimha. He can also be worshipped in four places, namely, below the earth, in pillars, on hills and in the *Sudarsana*.

We have already noted that there is a *sthanu* form of the icon, representing Narasimha as coming out of a pillar. As Narasimha is regarded as being immanent everywhere and particularly in all hills, it is not unusual to find the Narasimha idol carved or depicted as Girija on the wall, in certain famous temples, such as Singaperumal Koil in Tamil Nadu and Mangalagiri in Andhra Pradesh.

Sudarsana Wheel

Reflecting the tradition about the presence of Narasimha in the *Sudarsana* wheel or *chakra* of Vishnu in all Vaishnavite shrines in which this wheel is separately installed and worshipped, it is usual to depict Narasimha on the back, with eight or 16 arms. Narasimha is then regarded as residing in the heart of *Sudarsana* (*Padma Samhita*, 31, 257). The *Sudarsana* wheel itself is a form of Vishnu as the *Chakrarupi*. In worshipping the *Sudarsana chakra*, therefore, one automatically offers worship, not only to Narasimha, but also to Vishnu in all the other forms.

We have finally an unusual representation of Narasimha as Ganda-berunda, a fierce bird-animal. He assumed this form when Siva became Sarabha or Sarabhesvara a

ferocious animal, with the intention of conquering and pacifying Narasimha, who continued to be fierce, even after killing Hiranyakasipu and frightened the devas and all others because of his ferocity. Icons of the Ganda-berunda are, however, rare. It is even doubtful, whether apart from pictures, we have any representation of this form.

Fierce Form

The Narasimha idol is generally regarded as being Ugra or fierce, even when it is not specifically cast in this mould. According to the tradition which is followed in many Vaishnavite temples, it is usual, therefore, to raise a wall at the outer

limit of the shrine in which the Narasimha idol has been installed, so as to protect the residents of the town or village from the ferocity of the icon. This must be regarded, however, as a survival of a practice, which was not wholly rational or justified, even when it first originated in some remote past.

Although Narasimha has several forms, it is usual to worship him only with Lakshmi. He is a saviour and protector, dispensing boons, when prayers are addressed to him in this benign form.

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The Glorious Form of Narasimha

Glaring eyes burning as blazing cinder, tongue as a dagger just used in piercing to death, neck with folds, eyebrows looking mad, tusks like young moon, fierce face with bushy mane grown to it, hair long and sharp like pointed wire, claws looking like having drunk blood, body shining as if countless suns had arisen together, all combined as if the fire of anger burning inside had incarnated, in the shape of a lion upto neck and a human shape below the neck.

S. Paramesvaran in Bhaktidipika.

Sri Narasimhavatara

Discarding ancient weapons like the disc (Sudarsana) or bow (Saranga), Bhagavan Narasimha destroyed Hiranyakasipu with a new weapon, which was nothing but his nails. Thus, his valour and power never failed. May the man-lion god's valour protect the inhabitants of all the three worlds! Thanks to the unanticipated incarnation of Bhagavan Narasimha, the giant pillar in the palace of Hiranyakasipu had the blessing of becoming fertile; it gave birth to Nara Hari.

Sri Vedanta Desika

Images of Narasimha-- a Pictorial Study

The study of physical features, postures and actions of Narasimha images reveals a fascinating variety and richness of detail.

Narasimha's iconography incorporates all the details of the well-known legend. The deity is shown variously as emerging from the pillar, rushing upon Hiranyakasipu, fighting with him, tearing open the demon's belly and pulling out the entrails, having held the demon prostrate on his lap, and offering protection to Prahlada.



He is shown in all the three conventional postures; seated (*asana*), standing (*sthanaka*) and striding (*yanaka*). He is shown in his aspect of ferocity (*ugra*) and also in his

aspect of benevolence to his devotee (*saumya, varada*). He is alone (*kevala*) or in the company of Lakshmi, or of Prahlada, or of both.

Forms of Worship

Thus there are numerous forms



of Narasimha in vogue and in worship. Most of the varieties of Narasimha given in *Vihagendra Samhita* appear to be little more than names. The text says that the dis-

inction between the forms lies in the weapon that is held. But this claim cannot be sustained. Some of the adjectives merely refer to the several details of the Narasimha legend: Stambha Narasimha (coming



from Kashmir

out of the pillar), Svayam Narasimha (manifesting on his own), Grahana Narasimha (catching hold of the demon), Vidarana Narasimha (ripping open the belly of the demon), Samhara Narasimha (killing the demon) and so on.

Some of the forms included are little more than descriptive epithets: Ghora Narasimha, Ugra Narasimha, and Chanda Narasimha refer to the ferocious aspect of the incarnation; Jvala Narasimha refers to the flames of fire which surround the deity's head.

Lakshmi Narasimha is Narasimha accompanied by Lakshmi (for purposes of pacification of the fury); Prasada Narasimha is in the benign aspect of protecting Prahlada (and

hence the form is also known as Prahlada Varada); Chhatra Narasimha is decorated by a five-hooded serpent serving as a parasol.

Yogesvara Narasimha is the form suited for those who seek salvation; Avesa Narasimha is the picture of frenzy, while Attahasa Narasimha is the form that roars horribly and majestically strides across to destroy evil.

Chakra Narasimha holds only discus in his hand; Brahma Narasimha, Vishnu Narasimha and Rudra Narasimha are the three familiar gods represented as Narasimha; Prithvi Narasimha, Vayu Narasimha, Akasa Narasimha, Jvalana Narasimha and Amrita Narasimha represent the five elements, earth, air, *akasa*, fire and water, respectively.

Pusti Narasimha is worshipped for overcoming evil influences; Nava Vyuha Narasimha is the constellation of nine different forms of Narasimha.

Fighting Against Evil

Notwithstanding the numerous varieties like those which are standing, riding Garuda, alone, in company, benign, ferocious, multi-armed (two to 16), some features are commonly to be noticed. The differences between the forms are largely due to postures and actions suggested. But the symbolism is unmistakably one of fighting against evil.

Vishnu Dharmottara identifies Narasimha with the *Sankarshana* form of Vishnu and explains that the



Narasimha from Namakkal cave temple

demon Hiranyakasipu actually represents ignorance and that Narasimha destroys it. *Sankarshana* in the form of Narasimha destroys the sins of the world, arising from speech, mind and body. Narasimha's form in this text has been described as 'destructive of all ignorance'.

Sattvata Samhita in a similar vein, explains that the composite form of Narasimha incorporates pure-knowledge and the undoing of the fear born of *karma*.

Physical Features

In keeping with this symbolism and in accordance with the legends in the background, some features that are common to the various forms may be mentioned. The body is that of a human being, but the head is leonine surrounded by thick and heavy mane resembling a circle of flames (*Vishnutantra*). His three eyes, which are large and round

emit sparks of fire (*Sesha Samhita*) and glow like fire and sun put together (*Visvaksena Samhita*).

The body is a mass of crystal white, resembling a big mountain (*Visvaksena Samhita*) and shines like snow, jasmine flower or moon (*Isvara Samhita*). But it is enclosed by burning sparks of fire that emanate from the body itself (*Sattvata Samhita*). Thus he appears curiously ferocious.

His eye-brows are knitted and twisted with fury (*Hayasirsha Samhita*). The tongue is thrust out and is eager to lap up blood. A tall, tapering and splendid crown adorns the head; and the form is richly bedecked with all ornaments especially *Srivatsa* and *Kaustubha* on the chest



Yoga Narasimha

(which are the characteristic jewels of Vishnu). There is seen a serpent dangling from the left shoulder, forming the sacrificial cord.

Padma Samhita prescribes that Narasimha must be shown as wearing a red-coloured bodice, while most of the texts only mention that his garments are red in colour. *Vishnu Dharmottara*, however, suggests that Narasimha must wear dark-blue clothes and *Sattvata Samhita* prescribes yellow, and *Visvakṣena Samhita* describes the deity's body as daubed by red sandal paste.

Postures and Actions

Most commonly, Narasimha has but one head. In fact, *Sattvata Samhita* specifies this detail. But *Iṣvara*



Varada Narasimha



Yogi Narasimha

Samhita describes a form of Narasimha with five heads and ten arms. There is a head facing each of the four directions, and the fifth head is on top and is brilliant like the blazing fire. The heads facing east, west, south and north are said to shine like moon (*viz*, white), collyrium (black), gold (yellow) and red-coloured insect (*indra-gopa*), respectively. The hands carry rosary, mace, lotus, bow, ploughshare, discus, arrow, gesture of boon-bestowal and sword. This form of Narasimha is called Meru; it is worshipped to get rid of all diseases.

The Narasimha images are usually classified into two broad types: *girija* (or *kevala*) and *sthunaja* (*sthau-na*). The former expression suggests



Narasimha from Sarangapani temple, Kumbhakonam

Narasimha rushing out of a mountain-cave to protect his devotees; he is shown as a lone figure, seated in easy or yogic posture, bestowing boon or offering protection.

The latter expression, on the other hand, signifies Narasimha bursting out of the pillar of Hiranyakasipu's palace, split into two. He is ferocious and is shown as fighting with the demon or as ripping open his belly; he stands or dances, struts about or sits; but the demon is shown along with him; or to calm his fury, Lakshmi, Prahlada or Garuda is also shown with him.

Vaikharnasagama which distinguishes between Kevala Narasimha

and Sthauna Narasimha points out that the former is benign while the latter is terrific. In the former variety, the deity sits on a lotus-seat with legs crossed or in the *utkutikasana* posture. He is bedecked with all ornaments. He has only four hands, upper ones holding discus (right) and conch (left), and the normal hands stretched over the knees.

Extracts from Pratima Kosha, Volume III on Iconography, Kalpatharu Research Academy, Bangalore.



Narasimha from Ahobilam

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The Temples of Narasimha-- Andhra Pradesh

DR. VARADACHARI SADAGOPAN

Out of five main temple-centres, the Ahobila Kshetra, which is the actual place of origin for Narasimha, has as many as nine different murtis.

The State of Andhra Pradesh is blessed with five famous temples for Lord Narasimha, where worship has continued without interruption for centuries. These temples in the alphabetical order are at (1) Ahobilam (2) Ananthavadi (3) Mangalagiri (4) Simhachalam and (5) Yadagirigutta.

Ahobila Kshetra

This is one of the 108 centres sacred to Vishnu worshippers. Legend has it that Bhagavan Narasimha appeared in Ahobilam to protect his devotee Prahlada and to destroy his offending father, Hiranyakasipu. There are nine separate *sannidhis* (temples) in Ahobilam hills associated with the different aspects of the incarnation of Maha Vishnu in the form of Narasimha (man-lion). These nine *sannidhis* are celebrated in the following Sanskrit verse: "Jwaala Ahobila Malola Karodaa Kaarancha Bhargava; Yogananda Chatravata Paavano Nava Murthaya."

These nine *sannidhis* give rise to the name of *Nava Narasimha Kshetra*

for Ahobilam. In addition to the above nine *sannidhis*, there is also a *sannidhi* at the foot of the Ahobilam hills.

The Ahobilam temple complex is located in the Ahobilam hills, which is a part of the Nallamalai chain of hills. The ancient temples--Tirupati, Ahobilam and Sri Sailam--find their homes in the Nallamalai hills. The Tirupati temple for Balaji is considered the head of the chain, Ahobilam temple complex the body and Sri Sailam temple as the feet.

Legend further has it that Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati conducted a gigantic prenuptial feast at Ahobilam at the request of his future bride Padmavati as a prerequisite for the marriage. Thereby he got Bhagavan Lakshmi Narasimha's blessings for the wedding. Thus the presiding deity of Ahobilam has the distinction of being worshipped by Lord Srinivasa in a vein similar to Lord Ranganatha being worshipped by Ramachandra at Ayodhya.

This ancient pilgrim centre of

Ahobilam can be reached from Nandyal (37 miles) or Arlagadda (12 miles) by bus. Approximately 1200 years ago, Thirumangai Azhwar travelled by foot to Ahobilam hills to visit the *Nava Narasimha sannidhis*. He has described in ten moving verses the sanctity and inaccessibility of this ancient pilgrim centre. Even today, the journey to the nine *sannidhis* is not for the faint-hearted.

The Jeeyars (pontiffs) of the Ahobila Mutt supervise the administration of this pilgrim centre due to their special connection with Bhagavan Narasimha enshrined here. They conduct worship according to *Pancharatra Agama*, thrice daily in Lower Ahobilam temple at the foot of the hills and once in Upper Ahobilam at the top of the mountain.

The 44 Jeeyars of Ahobila Mutt starting from the first Jeeyar, Adi Van Satakopa Yateendra Maha Desikan (1379-1459 A.D.), have built and maintained the different buildings and *sannidhis* of this temple complex. Particular mention must be made of the many *mantapas* (resting places) for the pilgrims between Lower and Upper Ahobilam.

There is a big temple at Lower Ahobilam, where Lakshmi Narasimha and *Prahlada Varada sannidhis* are found. *Brahmotsavam* (grand annual festival) is conducted for these deities for ten days here and it concludes on the full moon day of the Tamil month of *Muasi*. The presiding deities of Lower Ahobilam are not part of the *Nava Narasimhas* saluted by the Sanskrit verse. The nine are at upper

Ahobilam and the surrounding hills at a distance of approximately five miles from Lower Ahobilam and at a height of 3000 feet above sea level.

There are also a number of sacred tanks and rivers in the Ahobilam hills, where pilgrims take their ritual bath prior to worship at the *Sannadhis* of *Nava Narasimhas*. These waters are known as Indra, Bhavanasini, Narasimha, Gaja, Bhargava, Hanumat, and Azhwar Koneri *Teerthams*.

The *Nava Narasimhas* at Ahobilam are as follows.

Yogananda and Chatravata Murtis: The *sannidhi* of Yogananda Narasimha is in the southeastern direction of the Lower Ahobilam temple on the way to Upper Ahobilam. This Narasimha sits in yogic posture (*yoga bandha*) with crossed legs and the front two hands resting on his knees. He is said to have taught Prahlada yogic exercises.

Chatravata Narasimha shrine is approximately one mile to the west of Yogananda Narasimha *sannidhi*. He is inside a cave and is seen in a standing posture, facing east. One needs lanterns to see him, since it is very dark inside the *sannidhi*. He is very beautiful to look at.

Ugra and Varaha Narasimha: Both the *sannidhis* are on top of the hill (Vedadri hill) at Upper Ahobilam in a valley near the sacred river of Bhavanasini. There are three caves on the southern side. The central one contains Ugra Narasimha excavated from the rock-bed and represents Bhagavan Narasimha in the act of ripping

open Hiranyakasipu's abdomen with his two powerful hands. On the eastern side at a distance of about half a mile is a shrine dedicated to Varaha Narasimha to the west of the Vedadri hills. Here Bhagavan offers *darsana* as a bridegroom.

Prahlada or Lakshmi Malola Narasimha: The *sannidhi* of Prahlada Narasimha is a couple of miles away from Varaha Narasimha shrine. We worship him inside a cave at a steep incline of the hill. Here he is seated calmly with Mahalakshmi on his lap. The *Utsava murti* of this deity was given to the first Jeeyar of Ahobila Mutt for his daily worship by Bhagavan Narasimha in the year 1399 A.D. Since that time until today, the *Utsava murti* of Lakshmi Narasimha has travelled to all nooks and corners of India with all the 44 Ahobila Mutt Jeeyars.

Four years ago, the 44th Jeeyar brought back the *Utsava murti* for a reunion with the *Moola murti* of Lakshmi Narasimha at Upper Ahobilam and conducted worship to both of them in the same *sannidhi* after the passage of five centuries. Close to Prahlada Narasimha shrine is a slab called *Prahlada Banda*, where the child Prahlada is said to have received his lessons from the teacher appointed by his father. Two miles from here, is the *Ukkusthambham*, whence Bhagavan Narasimha emerged for the purpose of his *Avatara*.

Near the Prahlada Narasimha *sannidhi* is a *mantapam* with a pillar containing the statue of

Mahalakshmi, who turns her face away from her consort in anger and disgust because of his affection for Chenchu Lakshmi, the daughter of the chieftan of the adjacent Chenchu hills.

Jwala Narasimha: In between Garudachalam and Vedadri, there is a small hill housing the *sannidhi* of Jwala Narasimha of the fierce form. According to Puranas, after the destruction of Hiranyakasipu, Bhagavan Narasimha was aflame with rage and appeared like a million rising suns due to his awesome brilliance. It is said that the *Devas* approached him cautiously and bathed him in the waters of the sacred Ganga river, which afterwards took on the name of Bavanasini. This *sannidhi* is not easily accessible to pilgrims.

Pavana or Parmulidi Narasimha: At a distance of five miles from either lower or upper Ahobilam is the shrine of Pavana Narasimha. This *sannidhi* is on the bank of *Pavana Teertha*, which is to the south of Garuda river. This deity is very popular with devotees, since he has a reputation of answering their prayers.

Karancha and Bhargava Narasimhas: Near the bank of Bhavanasini river, there is a sacred pond known as *Bhargava Teertha*. Both Bhargava and Karancha Narasimha *sannidhis* are close to *Bhargava Teertha*. Karancha Narasimha is seen in the sitting posture with *sarangam*, his bow and *sudarsanam*, his disc on his hands. He is well known for his curative powers. Bhargava Narasimha is the

last of the *Nava Narasimhas*.

Other Narasimha Temples

Let us now offer our worship at the other four temples dedicated to Bhagavan Narasimha in Andhra Pradesh.

Anantavadi: This temple is situated at the junction of Vasishta river, and the mighty Godavari river in the East Godavari District. The deity here is that of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha, one of the *Nava Narasimhas*. The temple, originally built by the Pallavas when they ruled over this region, was inundated by the sea waters. The present temple was built by later day devotees and is located at a distance of six miles by road from Narasapur railway station. Many pilgrims offer their worship at this temple.

Mangalagiri: This *sannidhi* is on the top of a hill and is dedicated to Sri Lakshmi Narasimha. The *murti* is said to be *Swayam Vyakta* or self-manifested. It is easy of access from Mangalagiri railway station located between Vijayawada and Guntur. This temple attracts a very large number of pilgrims from every part of India. The worship is conducted according to *Vaikhanasa Agama*.

The Bhagavan on the top of the hill is also called *Panakalarayadu*, because of his affection for scented jaggery water. As *Panaka* is poured into the mouth of the deity, a gurgling sound is heard as though Lord Narasimha is actually drinking the offering. Irrespective of the quantity of *Panaka* offered to him, he takes only half the quantity and the rest overflows at the mouth. The

remaining half is distributed as *prasada* to the devotees. Another noteworthy phenomenon is that there are no ants in sight at the *sannidhi* in spite of the huge quantities of jaggery water offering daily to *Panakalarayadu*.

Simhachalam: This *sannidhi* can be reached from Simhachalam railway station, next to Waltair. Two miles from the Simhachalam station is a hill on which devotees offer their worship to the presiding deity, Varaha Narasimha. This temple is an ancient one and has beautiful sculptures carved out of dark granite.

Varaha Narasimha Swami is covered by sandal paste throughout the year, except for one day (*Akshaya Tritēya* day). On that day, the true form of this deity can be seen in the sitting posture. Next to Varaha Narasimha is a two-foot high *stambha* representing another form of Narasimha. At Simhachalam both the sandal-covered deity and the *stambha* symbolising his incarnation are worshipped together.

Legend has it that Bhagavan took the Ugra Narasimha form at Ahobilam to destroy Hiranyakasipu. Immediately after the destruction of the evil Asura, Ugra Narasimha went into yogic trance with the same frightening figure. The *Devas* and seers begged him to resume his merciful form so that they can approach him without fear and offer homage. Ugra Narasimha told them that he would give his *darsan* at Simhachalam in his easy-to-approach merciful form and instructed them to proceed

there. As a result, Bhagavan appears in his benevolent form as Varaha Narasimha on the Simhachalam hills. There are other shrines for Venugopala and Govindaraja at the Simhachalam temple.

Yadagiriguttah: This *sannidhi* is in Bhonghir Taluk, Nalagonda District. Here again, Bhagavan Narasimha presides in a temple on top of a hill as Sri Lakshmi Narasimha. According to legend, one Yada Rshi performed penance here and Bhagavan appeared before his

devotee in the forms of Jwala, Yogananda and Gandabheranda Narasimhas in addition to his peaceful form as Lakshmi Narasimha. There is a sacred pond known as *Narasimha Pushkarani* outside the temple, which is said to have been dug by Yada Rshi to bathe the deity. Even today, this practice is continued. The deity of Lakshmi Narasimha Swami is beautiful to behold and is no wonder that this *sannidhi* attracts thousands of pilgrims from all over India.



The Figure of Narasimha

The *Bhagavata* describes the springing of Narasimha from a pillar thus:

As Hiranyakasipu was waiting with curiosity to see what would happen, the terrifying figure of Narasimha suddenly appeared—with eyes blazing with molten gold, mouth wide open in the middle of shining bushy mane, tusks fearfully long and curved, tongue swaying like a sword, eyebrows fierce and knitted, ears standing erect and still, nostrils wide and deep as mountain canyons, jaws fierce, prominent, thick and broad, body huge and touching the sky, thickly covered with bushy hair exuberantly grown, and yellow as the light of the moon, neck stout, fat and short, chest excessively broad, waist small and narrow, and claws sharp, pointed, and protruded.

Bhagavata (Sk. 7, Ch.8)
Dr. N. B. Patil



The myth of Narasimha appears to have trickled in Arabian and Egyptian literature, where we find Yoguth as a lion-god and Sekhmet as the lion-headed goddess. Further in Egypt, we get the sphinx with a human head and a lion's body (just the opposite of Narasimha, with human body and a lion's head) a guardian deity of the abode of Ra—the Sun god.

Temples of Narasimha-- Tamil Nadu

DR. VARADACHARI SADAGOPAN

*Scintillating verses have been composed by Azhwars
on different murtis of Narasimha in temples
scattered over this state.*

The State of Tamil Nadu is blessed with many temples dedicated to Bhagavan Narasimha; there are also celebrated *sannidhis* for Sri Narasimha in temples dedicated to other deities.

We will provide particulars on a subset of 14 *sannidhis* for Bhagavan Narasimha in the State of Tamil Nadu. They are located at the following towns and villages: (1) Triplicane or Thiru Allikeni (2) Thiru Velukkai (3) Thiru Neermalai (4) Thiruvali-Thiru Nagari (5) Thiru Nagai (6) Kancheepuram (7) Thirukkattigai (8) Thiru Ghostiyur (9) Tanjayali Koil (10) Sri Rangam (11) Kondirajapalayam (12) Niravaloor (13) Namakkal, and (14) Singaperumal Koil.

Among these 14 temples, the first ten are a part of the 108 Indian temples celebrated in the compendium of 4000 verses composed by the 12 Vaishnavite Azhwars.

Thiru Allikeni

This temple is located right in the heart of Madras city. It is about two miles south of Madras Central Rail-

way Station and about two miles East of Madras-Egmore Station. Both Parthasarati and Narasimha share this temple complex. Parthasarati faces the eastern direction and gives *darsana* in standing posture. Bhagavan Narasimha faces the western direction and provides *darsana* in the seated posture.

Thirumangai Azhwar has composed ten verses (*pasurams*) on the two presiding deities of Thiru Allikeni. One of these ten verses addresses Bhagavan Narasimha. Azhwar describes Sri Narasimha as the Azhagiya Singar and Thelliya Singar to recognise his beautiful countenance shining with supreme wisdom.

The *Utsava murti*'s hands have a gesture symbolising his invitation for Prahlada to come near. The *Moola murti* is seated in the yogic posture, similar to the one in upper Ahobilam. Thirumangai summarises brilliantly the *Narasimha Avatara* as the one to protect Prahlada and to destroy Hiranyakasipu.

Thiruvellukkai

This divine place is very close to Toopul, the birth place of the celebrated *Acharya*, Sri Vedanta Desika and is near Kancheepuram. Sri Vedanta Desika has composed a poem containing eight verses in celebration of Bhagavan Narasimha of Thiruvellukkai. He is also seated in the yogic posture facing the eastern direction.

Sri Vedanta Desika states that Bhagavan Narasimha prefers his residence at Thiruvellukkai over his permanent residence at Sri Vaikuntam. He also states that Sri Narasimha of this temple is the essence of one of the 108 Upanishads named after him. (*Narasimha Tapaneeya Upanishad*).

Thiruneermalai or Toyyachalam

This temple is about three miles from Pallavaram train station on the Madras-Chengelpet rail route and is 15 miles south of Madras-Egmore station. There is a small hill here. At the foot of the hill, there are shrines for Thiruneervannan.

On the top of the hill, there are shrines for Sri Ranganatha, Sri Ramachandra, Santha Narasimha and Trivikrama. Worship is conducted according to *Vaikhanasa agama* here. In the times of Thirumangai Azhwar, it was not easy to reach this shrine. He stayed on a small hillock nearby and did penance to the presiding deities for six months as he was unable to reach the temple due to persisting floods.

Thiruvali-Thirunagari

Thirumangai Azhwar was born at a small village known as Karaiyalur, very close to Thiruveli. There

are 43 verses in the *Naaliyara Divya Prabhandam* associated with this temple. The authors of these 43 verses are Thirumangai Azhwar (42) and Kulasekhara Azhwar (1).

There is also a *sannidhi* for Bhagavan Narasimha at Thirunagari on the western perimeter of the *sanctum sanctorium*. Thirumangai Azhwar's *pasurams* on the presiding deities of Thiruvali, Thirunagari are most moving and beautiful. This place is six miles from Seerkashi, the birth place of Tiru Jnana Sambhandar in Tanjore District.

Thirunagai

Thirunagi Azhwar has composed ten verses to celebrate the incomparable beauty of the presiding deity of the temple, Soundarya Rajan, at Thirunagai. This place is close to Nagapatnam railway station in Tanjore District.

One of the *sannidhis* at Thirunagai houses a rare form, *Ashta Bhuja Narasimha* with eight hands. He is said to perform *Dushta Nigraham* (punishment of the evil ones) and *Sishta Paripalana* (protection of his devotees) with each set of four hands. He is seen in the aspect of destroying Hiranyakasipu and at the same time blessing Prahlada.

Kancheepuram

There is an ancient *sannidhi* for Bhagavan Narasimha under the hill known as Atthigiri on top of which Lord Varadaraja has his famous temple. Atthigiri is said to be the elephant of Indra known as Iravata, which is bearing Sri Varadaraja Perumal. Once, Brahma used Atthigiri as the place for performing

Aswamedha yaga. Lord Varadaraja appeared in the altar fire and blessed Brahma.

Legend has it that Brahma got permission first from Bhagavan Narasimha, resident of the Atthigiri, to perform *Aswamedha yaga*. Hence, Bhagavan Narasimha *sannidhi* precedes that of the celebrated Varadaraja Perumal. It is also opined that the seven Kancheepuram *pasurams* of Thirumangai, Pey and Bhothahazhwar address Bhagavan Narasimha rather than Varadaraja Perumal. Even today devotees worship Bhagavan Narasimha inside the cave first before ascending the Atthigiri hill to offer their worship to Lord Varadaraja.

Thirukkatigai

This divine place is otherwise known as Sholingar or Cholingipuram, which is derived from the ancient name of Cholasimhapuram. It is also known as Thirukkatigai, from the name Katiga meaning a university. It is possible that Cholasimhapuram was the ancient seat of serious studies devoted to philosophy and religion. Even today, there is a Sanskrit college at Sholingar. Katigai also means a fraction of a second in Sanskrit.

The name Thirukkatigai is attributed to this pilgrim centre since it is believed that even a fraction of a second's stay at this place will release one from the cycles of births and deaths. There are four *pasurams* by Thirumangai and Pey Azhwar on Bhagavan Narasimha of Thirukkatigai.

Sholingar is at the foot of the hill

known as Ghatikachalam, which is approximately eight miles away from Sholingar railway station between Arakonam and Katpadi. The shrine for Yoga Narasimha is situated on Ghatikachalam, which is 400 feet high. The shrine is open only about noon and *darsana* can be had only then. Yoga Narasimha has the reputation of driving away evil spirits and as a result, many devotees throng this shrine to obtain his blessings.

Opposite Yoga Narasimha *sannidhi* is a small hillock on which Yoga Anjaneya stands facing West towards the presiding deity of Thirukkatigai. Yoga Anjaneya has the divine disc (*chakra*) and *Shanka* (conch) on his hands. Pilgrims offer their worship to Yoga Narasimha first and to Yoga Anjaneya next.

There are the three famous compositions on Sholingar Narasimha by saint Thyagaraja (2) and Muthuswamy Dikshithar (1) in the *ragas* of *Balahamsa*, *Bilahari* and *Mohanam*, respectively.

Thiru Ghostiyur

Tenkotti and Ghoshtipuram are the other names for this Vaishnavite centre celebrated by Azhvars through 39 *pasurams*. This is the birthplace of Thiru Ghostiyur Nambi, one of the five *Acharyas* of Sri Ramanuja. This *Acharya* initiated Sri Ramanuja into the intricacies of Sri Vaishnava doctrines by explaining the meaning and importance of the sacred *mantra* associated with Sri Narayana.

The *sannidhi* has a *sanctum sanctorum* with four tiers or storeys. On the ground floor is a temple for

the reclining Vishnu, first floor has Vishnu in standing posture, second floor has the deity in the seated posture and in the basement is a temple of dancing Krishna. On the northern perimeter (*Prakaram*) of this *sanctum sanctorum*, one has the *daršana* of two Narasimha *murtis*. One is seen in the aspect of chasing Hiranyakasipu and the other in the aspect of holding him on his lap and tearing his abdomen apart.

The name of Ghostipuram is linked with the legend of *Devas* coming to this village in secrecy in group (*ghosti*) to discuss ways to approach Lord Vishnu to destroy Hiranyakasipu and to save them from his atrocities.

Tanjayali Koil

This temple is approximately two and a half miles north of Thanjavur railway station *en route* to Tiruvaiyaru, the village where the *sannidhi* of saint Thyagabrahmam is located. This pilgrim centre is on the bank of Vennar, one of the five tributaries of Cauveri River.

Thirumangai and Bhoothata Azhwar have composed three *pasurams* in honour of the deities associated with the three *sannidhis* of Tanjayali Koil, Mamanikkoil and Manikkunra Koil. Bhagavan Narasimha is the presiding deity of Tanjayali Koil.

Near Tanjayali Koil is the village of Melattur, where the senior contemporary of saint Thyagaraja performed the dance drama on Bhagavan Narasimha in the *Bhagavata mela* or *Yaksha gana* style. Even today, this practice is continued each year at Melattur.

Sri Rangam

In this ancient temple located in an island formed by Cauvery and Coleroon Rivers, Lord Ranganatha is the presiding deity. In this temple complex, there is an important *sannidhi* for Bhagavan Narasimha known as *Mettu Azhagiya Singar* shrine. The great Tamil poet Kamban had *Arangetram* (inaugural reading of his version of *Ramayana*) in front of *Mettu Azhagiya Singar* and obtained his blessings. There is also a huge statue of Lakshmi Narasimha in a shrine close to Sri Rangam railway station.

Kondirajapalam

There is a shrine for Yoga Narasimha at this village, which is three miles from Thanjavur Palace, the seat of Mahratta kings. They worshipped Sri Kodanda Ramaswami in a shrine inside the palace. Lord Rama was the tutelary deity of the Mahratta kings. Legend has it that one Petha Dasa had a shop in front of the temple for selling material for worship of Sri Kodanda Ramaswami. He always uttered the name of Hari after selling the *puja* material and prostrated before the devotees.

The Nayak king was amused by the ritual of Petha Dasa and wanted to play a joke on him. The king asked his men to drag two donkeys in front of the shop of Petha Dasa. One of the donkeys had the Vaishnavite insignias of the disc and conch on its sides and the other was undecorated. On seeing the two donkeys, Petha Dasa went round the donkey bearing symbols of

Vishnu and prostrated before it and ignored the other donkey.

The king asked Petha Dasa to explain his "strange" behaviour. He replied that the donkey bearing Vaishnavite insignias reminded him of Hari and the other donkey reminded him of the king and himself. On hearing this, the king flew into a rage and ordered Petha Dasa to be sent to the gallows. While Petha Dasa was being led to Kondirajapalayam, the seat of the gallows, he chanted the name of Bhagavan Narasimha without interruption. When the king's men reached the site of the gallows with Petha Dasa, they witnessed a miracle. A mysterious fire razed the gallows to the ground.

The king then realised the power of the devotee of Bhagavan Narasimha and atoned for his arrogant behaviour. He ceded the region of Kondirajapalayam to Petha Dasa and erected the temple for Yoga Narasimha as his atonement. This region is known as Kalimedu today.

Niravaloor

This village is off the 37th milestone on the Madras-Bangalore highway at a distance of less than a mile to the north. The celebrated sixth Jeeyar of Ahobila Mutt lived here for ten years. He had a dream in which Bhagavan Narasimha asked his Jeeyar to construct a temple for Sri Lakshmi Narayana at Niravaloor. The temple was constructed by the Jeeyar in the year 1503 A.D. The happenings before the construction of the temple with

the help of king of Vijayanagar are worthy of note.

Great Tamil poetess Avvayar had passed once through the village Niravaloor. The local ruler was an agnostic and refused to give water to Avvayar to quench her thirst. She in turn cursed the king and told him that the village will become completely dry.

A few years later, the sixth Jeeyar came and told the ruler about the command of Bhagavan Narasimha to build a temple at Niravaloor. The ruler gave a donation of 1400 acres to the Jeeyar and was sure that the Jeeyar will drop his efforts once he found the place had no water.

The Jeeyar however recited *Narasimha mantra* and dug a pond which was filled with water. This pond exists even today. Avvayar's curse was reversed and the ruler shed his agnosticism and became a devout disciple of the Ahobila Mutt Jeeyar.

While the Jeeyar was making arrangements for the construction of the temple, he was requested by Mukunda Deva Raya, king of Vijayanagar to come to the palace and cure his ailing daughter. The king said that he will build the temple for the Jeeyar, if he cured his daughter.

The Jeeyar cured the child of her illness and then went on a long pilgrimage to Badarikasramam. When he returned to Niravaloor from that long trip, he found the king had kept his word and completed the construction of the temple. The king also carved in stone the episode of the Jeeyar.

curing his daughter's illness. The Jeeyar then installed the idol of his *upasana murti* Ugra Narasimha at the temple.

This was the sixth Jeeyar by name Srivan Satagopa Sri Shashta Parankusa Yateendra Maha Desikan, who entered a cave next to Ugra Narasimha *sannidhi* in upper Ahobilam and merged with him. The entrance to that cave is closed since he passed that way to join his *upasana murti* at Ahobilam.

Another miracle happened at Niravalloor. The 25th Jeeyar of Ahobila Mutt by the name Srivan Sri Satakopa Sri Srinivasa Yateendra Maha Desikan was the pontiff. He had, like the sixth Jeeyar, the ability to see and converse with Bhagavan Narasimha. The year was 1760 A.D.

Sixteen years before, the ruler of Bengal was blessed with a child after praying at Ugra Narasimha *sannidhi* at Niravalloor temple. The ruler was elated and promised then to build the main tower for the Niravalloor temple.

Time went by and the king entirely forgot about it. The teenage child suddenly fell ill. The ruler recognised his fault and travelled with the sick child to Niravalloor. On the way the boy died, as the ruler's party was nearing Niravalloor. The ruler was heartbroken. He fell at the feet of the 25th Jeeyar and begged for forgiveness.

The Jeeyar with the blessings of Bhagavan Narasimha, resurrected the boy to the joy of the royal parents. The grateful ruler of Bengal completed the main tower. Since that time (about 1760 A.D.),

the doors of the main tower are never closed. Such is the power of the events that happened at Niravalloor.

Namakkal

This town is located on the main route between Trichy and Salem. There is an ancient temple for Bhagavan Narasimha here. The name of the goddess of this temple is Namagiri Thayar and she has a reputation for answering prayers of her devotees and therefore attracts a large group of pilgrims.

As in the case of Thirukkatigai, there is a temple here for Hanuman close to Sri Narasimha's temple. The unique aspect of this Hanuman is that there is no roof over his head. Anjaneya stands here at a height of 25 feet. Once a year, a sacred bath is performed for him with the help of a scaffolding to reach his head.

Singaperumal Koil

There is a famous temple here for Bhagavan Narasimha at a distance of 30 miles from Madras city in the southern direction. The icon of Narasimha is hewn out of a huge rock. Devotees who wish to do circumambulation (*pradakshinam*) here have to go around the rock out of which the image of Bhagavan Narasimha was hewn. This temple also attracts a large number of pilgrims.

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Part Three

॥ श्रीः ॥

॥ लक्ष्मीनृसिंहकरुणारसस्तोत्रम् ॥

Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Karunarasa Stotra

ADI SANKARACHARYA

श्रीमत्पयोनिधिनिकेतन चक्रपाणे भोगीन्द्रभोगमणिरञ्जितपुण्यमूर्ते ।
योगीश शाश्वत शरण्य भवाब्धिपोत लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥१॥

1. O, Eternal and Chief of yogis! Holder of disc! Your abode is the milky ocean. Your person dazzles with the reflected lustre of Ananta's thousand jewelled heads. In life's sea of strife, you are the sure ship to ferry. O Lakshmi Narasimha! I beseech you to give me your helping hand.

ब्रह्मेन्द्ररुद्रमरुदर्ककिरीटकोटिसंघट्टितांग्रिकमलामलकान्तिकान्त ।

लक्ष्मीलसत्कुचसरोरुहराजहंस लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥२॥

2. Your feet glisten in the light of sparkling diadems of celestials, such as Brahma, Indra, Rudra, Maruts and the Sun. You are a revelling swan in the beauty lake of your consort. O Lakshmi Narasimha! Extend your helping hand.

संसारदावदहनातुरभीकरोरुज्वालावलीभिरतिदग्धतनूरुहस्य ।

त्वत्पादपद्मसरसीं शरणागतस्य लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥३॥

3. My body has been roasted by raging forest fires of fierce samsara. I have sought refuge at your lotus feet. O Lakshmi Narasimha! Save me from this fire's periphery.

संसारजालपतितस्य जगन्निवास सर्वेन्द्रियार्थबडिशग्रझषोपमस्य
प्रोत्कम्पितप्रचुरतालुकमस्तकस्य लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥४॥

4. Like a poor fish, caught in the net of samsara, with jaws wide open,
as if hit hard by sensory perceptions, I am in a most parlous state. O
Benevolent One! Give me your helping hand and save me.

संसारकूपमतिघोरमगाधमूलं संप्राप्य दुःखशतसर्पसमाकुलस्य ।
दीनस्य देव कृपया पदमागतस्य लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥५॥

5. Fallen in life's bottomless pit ringed with slithering serpents of grief,
I have reached your feet in a pitiable state. O Compassionate One! Do help
me.

संसारभीकरकरीशकराभिघात निष्पीड्यमानवपुषः सकलार्तिनाश ।
प्राणप्रयाणभवभीतिसमाकुलस्य लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥६॥

6. Struck by samsara, like a terrific elephant, my body is sore and I am
scared of death. O Lakshmi Narasimha! Remover of all afflictions! Save
me by giving your hand.

संसारसर्पविषदिग्धमहोग्रतीव्र दंष्ट्रग्रकोटिकरिदष्टविनिष्टमूर्तेः ।
नागारिवाहन सुधाब्धिनिवास शौरै लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥७॥

7. I am bitten by the samsaric snake. The poison has spread all over the
body like fire. Your vehicle is Garuda, who is an enemy of the snakes. And
your abode is the soothing nectarine sea. O Lakshmi Narasimha! Give me
your gracious hand and save me.

संसारवृक्षमघबीजमनन्तकर्मशाखायुतं करणपत्रमनङ्गपुष्पम् ।
आरुह्य दुःखफलितं पततो दयालो लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥८॥

8. Sin is the seed for this tree of life. Endless activity constitutes its
branches. Sensory perceptions are its leaves. Countless desires are its
fruits. I climbed this tree and have jumped into a sea of sorrow. O Lakshmi
Narasimha! Give me your saving hand.

संसारसागरविशालकरालकालनक्रग्रहग्रसितनिग्रहविग्रहस्य ।

व्यग्रस्यरागनिचयोर्मिनिपीडितस्य लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥१॥

9. In this vast sea of samsara, I am caught by the fierce alligators of time and buffeted by waves of attachment. O Lord! Please extend me your helping hand.

संसारसागरनिमज्जनमुद्दामानं दीनं विलोक्य विभोकरुणानिधे माम् ।

प्रह्लादखेदपरिहारकृतावतार लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥१०॥

10. O Storehouse of Mercy! Look at me, the most pitiable one, going up and down in the illusory sea of life. O Lakshmi Narasimha, to save Prahlada from distress, you came down to earth. Show me similar mercy.

संसारघोरगहने चरतो मुरारे मारोग्रभीकरमृगप्रवरार्दितस्य ।

आर्तस्य मत्सरनिदाघसुदःखितस्य लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥११॥

11. Roaming in the vast woods of samsara, troubled by the predatory animals of desire and afflicted by envy, I am, O Lord, in great distress. Please extend me your helping hand.

बद्ध्वा गले यमभटा बहु तर्जयन्तः कर्षन्ति यत्र भवपाश शतैर्युतं माम् ।

एकाकिनं परवशं चकितं दयालो लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥१२॥

12. The servitors of Death have bound me fast and threatened me with dire consequences. I am alone with my freedom gone and utterly non-plussed. O Merciful One! Save me by extending your gracious hand.

लक्ष्मीपते कमलनाभ सुरेश विष्णो यज्ञेश यज्ञ मधुसूदन विश्वरूप ।

ब्रह्मण्य केशव जनार्दन वासुदेव लक्ष्मीनृसिंह ममदेहि करावलम्बम् ॥१३॥

13. Consort of Lakshmi and Lord of Celestials with lotus as your navel! O All pervading One! O Sacrifice and Lord of Sacrifice! O Killer of Madhu! O Brahmanya, Kesava, Janardana, Vasudeva whose form is the Universe! O Lakshmi Narasimha! Extend me your helping hand.

एकेन चक्रमपरेण करेण शङ्खं अन्येन सिन्धुतनयामवलम्ब्य तिष्ठन् ।

वामेतरेण वरदाभयपद्मचिह्नं लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥१४॥

14. In one hand holding the discus and in the other the conch, you stand embracing your consort Lakshmi, showing the gestures in other hands of

granting boon and fearlessness. O Lakshmi Narasimha! Extend me your helping hand and save me.

अन्धस्य मे हतविवेकमहाधनस्य चौरैर्महा बलिभिरिन्द्रियनामधेयैः ।

मोहान्धकारकुहरे विनिपातितस्य लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥१५॥

15. I am blind. I am deprived of my immense wealth of discrimination, by the thieves of strong senses. Having robbed me, they have thrown me into a dark cave of delusion. O Lakshmi Narasimha! Extend me your helping hand.

प्रह्लादनारदपराशरपुण्डरीकव्यासादिभागवतपुङ्गवहन्निवास ।

भक्तानुक्तपरिपालनपारिजात लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम् ॥१६॥

16. You live in the hearts of devotees, such as Prahlada, Narada, Parasara, Pundarika, Vyasa, and the like. You ever fulfil the desires of your devotees. O Lakshmi Narasimha! Extend your hand and save me.

लक्ष्मीनृसिंहचरणाब्जमधुव्रतेन स्तोत्रं कृतं शुभकरं भुवि शंकरेण ।

ये तत्पठन्ति मनुजा हरिभक्तियुक्ताः ते यान्ति तत्पदसरोजमरवण्डरूपम् ॥१७॥

17. This auspicious hymn been authored by Sankara, a bee revelling in the lotus feet of Lakshmi Narasimha. Whoever recites this hymn, endowed with Hari bhakti, will attain to the Lord's lotus feet and get liberated.

Translated into English by M. V. B. S. Sarma.





Malola Narasimha

श्रीनृसिंहपर्वते

॥ श्री नृसिंहभुजङ्गप्रयातस्तवः ॥

Sri Narasimha Bhujanga Prayata Stotra

H. H. SRI SACCHIDANANDA SIVABHINAVA NARASIMHA BHARATI

In the Kigga mountains near Sringeri, at about 2000 feet height, bordering closely on rivers Nalini and Nandini, there has been for years a self-manifested (*Swayambhu*) icon of Bhagavan Narasimha. H. H. Sri Narasimha Bharati (the 32nd pontiff of Sri Sringeri Sarada Pitham), who used to visit the hill, was attracted by the *murti* and started worshipping it. Later, he started doing *tapas* there despite the movement of tigers and other wild animals. This composition of 18 *slokas*, replete with obeisance to Lord Narasimha, is a spontaneous composition by his successor, His Holiness Sri Sacchidananda Sivabhinava Narasimha Bharati, who was also devoted to the place.

ऋतं कर्तुमेवाशु नम्रस्य वाक्यं सभास्तम्भमध्याद्य आविर्बभूव ।
तमानम्रलोकेष्टदानप्रचण्डं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥१॥

1. Salutations to Lord Narasimha who resides on the hill and who manifested in the pillar to prove Prahlada's veracity and who grants boons to devotees.

इनान्तर्दृगन्तश्च गाङ्गेयदेहं सदोपासते यं नराः शुद्धचित्ताः ।
तमस्ताघमेनोनिवृत्त्यै नितान्तं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥२॥

2. Obeisance to Narasimha who is untouched by sins, whom the holy ever worship with pure minds for the destruction of their sins as the divine person in the Sun's orb and in the inner eye.

शिवं शैववर्या हरि वैष्णवाग्न्याः पराशक्तिमाहुस्तथा शक्तिभक्ताः ।
यमेवाभिधाभिः परं तं विभिन्नं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥३॥

3. I bow to Narasimha, residing on the hills, who is beyond all names and forms, whom the Saivites worship as Siva, Vaishnavas as Vishnu, and Saktas as Para-Sakti.

कृपासागरं क्लिष्टरक्षाधुरीणं कृपाणं महापापवृक्षौघभेद।
नतालीष्टवाराशिराकाशशङ्कं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥४॥

4. Obeisance to Narasimha, the destroyer of sins, the protector of the afflicted, an ocean of mercy, and a bestower of boons.

जगन्नेति नेतीति वाक्यैर्निषिद्ध्यावशिष्टं परब्रह्मरूपं महान्तः।
स्वरूपेण विज्ञाय मुक्ता हि यं तं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥५॥

5. I bow to Narasimha by knowing whom as Parabrahman, men get liberated, negating the world as 'Not this, Not this.'

नतान्भोगसक्तानपीहाशु भक्तिं विरक्तिं च दत्वा दृढां मुक्तिकामान्।
विधातुं करे कङ्कणं धारयन्तं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥६॥

6. Obeisance to Narasimha who is resolved to make even pleasure-loving people as seekers of liberation by bestowing on them devotion and detachment.

नरो यन्मनोजपितो भक्तिभावाच्छरीरेण तेनैव पश्यत्यमोघाम्।
तनुं नारसिंहस्य वक्तीति वेदो नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥७॥

7. The Vedas say that men even in their embodied state will see Narasimha if they recited his mantra with fervid devotion. Obeisance to such Narasimha, residing on the hills.

यदङ्घ्र्यब्जसेवापराणां नराणां विरक्तिर्दृढा जायतेऽर्थेषु शीघ्रम्।
तमङ्गप्रभाधूतपूर्णन्दुकोटिं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥८॥

8. The devotees of Narasimha soon become dispassionate. His limbs dazzle like the moon. Obeisance to him.

रथाङ्गं पिनाकं वरं चाभयं यो विधत्ते कराब्जैः कृपावारिराशिः ।

तमिन्द्रच्छदेहं प्रसन्नास्यपद्मं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥१॥

9. Obeisance to the compassionate who has a pleasant face like the lotus, and who bears in his hands the discus, the bow and the gestures of boon and fearlessness.

पिनाकं रथाङ्गं वरं चाभयं च प्रफुल्लाम्बुजाकारहस्तैर्दधानम् ।

फणीन्द्रातपत्रं शुचीनेन्दुनेत्रं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥१०॥

10. Obeisance to Narasimha whose eyes are the fire, the sun and the moon, who bears the bow, the discus and the gestures of boon and fearlessness and whose canopy is the king of serpents, Adi Sesha.

विवेकं विरक्तिं शमादेश्च षट्कं मुमुक्षां च संप्राप्य वेदान्तजालैः ।

यतन्ते विबोधाय यस्यानिशं तं नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥११॥

11. Obeisance to Narasimha to realise whom men resort to scriptures and assiduously cultivate discrimination, detachment, restraint, absorption, endurance and faith.

सदा नन्दिनीतीरवासैकलोलं मुदा भक्तलोकं दृशा पालयन्तम् ।

विदामग्रगण्या नताः स्युर्यदङ्घ्रौ नमस्कुर्महे शैलवासं नृसिंहम् ॥१२॥

12. I bow to Narasimha whom the wise adore and who protects his devotees. He resides on the banks of the river Nandini.

यदीयस्वरूपं शिखा वेदराशेरजस्रं मुदा सम्यगुद्घोषयन्ति ।

नलिन्यास्तटे स्वैररसंचारशीलं चिदानन्दरूपं तमीडे नृसिंहम् ॥१३॥

13. I bow to Narasimha whom the Upanishads joyously proclaim as absolute bliss and awareness and who stays on the banks of the river Nalini.

यमाहुर्हि देहं हृषीकाणि केचित्परेऽसूंस्तथा बुद्धिशून्ये तथान्ये ।

यदज्ञानमुग्धा जना नास्तिकाग्न्याः सदानन्दरूपं तमीडे नृसिंहम् ॥१४॥

14. Not knowing the reality, the atheists say variously that he is the body, the senses, the vital airs, the intellect, the void, etc. I worship him in

the form of eternal bliss.

सदानन्दचिद्रूपमाम्नायशीर्षैर्विचार्यैर्वक्त्राद्यतीन्द्रा यदीयम् ।
सुखेनासते चित्तकञ्जे दधानाः सदानन्दचिद्रूपमीडे नृसिंहम् ॥१५॥

15. After enquiring into the Upanishads, one sits in peace and meditates in his heart on the form of consciousness and bliss.

पुरा स्तम्भमध्याद्य आविर्बभूव स्वभक्तस्य कर्तुं वचस्तथ्यमाशु ।
तमानन्दकारुण्यपूर्णान्तरङ्गं बुधा भावयुक्ता भजध्वं नृसिंहम् ॥१६॥

16. Narasimha once manifested in the pillar to prove that his devotee was truthful. His heart overflows with joy and compassion. May the wise worship him with all fervour.

पुरा शंकरार्या धराधीशभृत्यैर्विनिक्षिप्तवह्निप्रतप्तस्वदेहाः ।
स्तुवन्ति स्म यं दाहशान्त्यै जवात्तं बुधा भावयुक्ता भजध्वं नृसिंहम् ॥१७॥

17. Once Adi Sankara left his body and entered into the body of king Amaruka. The king's servants set the Acharya's body on fire. The Acharya then praised Narasimha to free him from the scorching fire. May all fervently worship Narasimha.

सदेमानि भक्त्याख्यसूत्रेण दृढ्यान्यमोघानि रत्नानि कण्ठे जना ये ।
धरिष्यन्ति तान्मुक्तिकान्ता वृणीते सखीभिवृता शान्तिदान्त्यादिमाभिः ॥१८॥

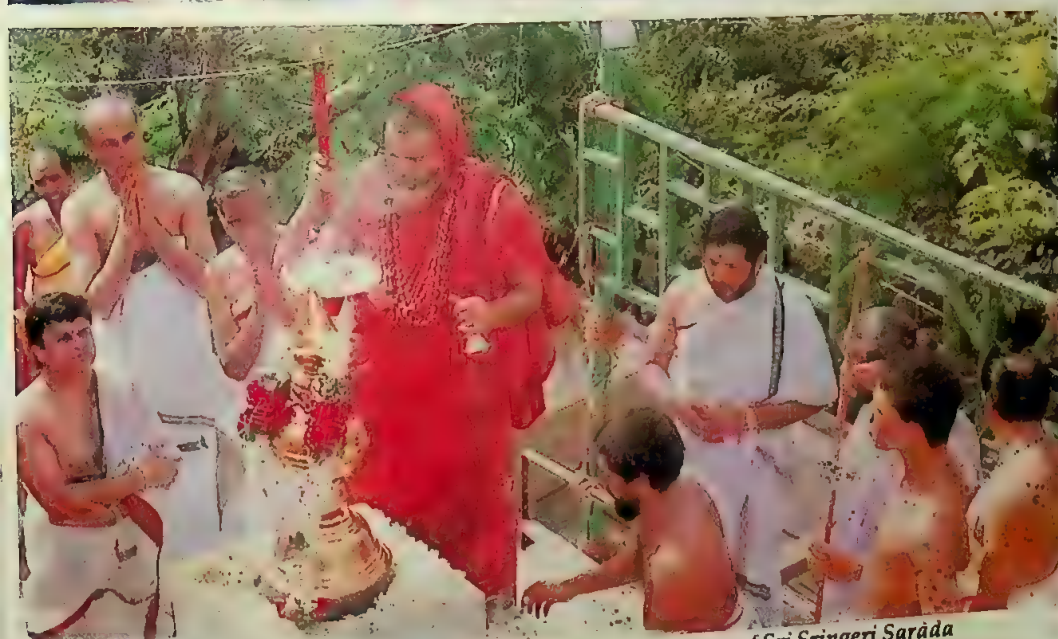
18. The dame of liberation with her mates, such as peace and restraint, will seek him who wears this hymnal necklace studded with precious stones and strung on a devotional thread.

इति श्रीनृसिंहभुजङ्गप्रयातस्तवः संपूर्णः ॥

(Translated into English by M. V. B. S. Sarma)

Correction

April 1992 Issue: The second line in Sanskrit verse on Page 7 should read: Kaivalya kalara kalpatarave gurave ramah.
Contents of Pages 51 and 53 should be swapped.



Top: His Holiness performing Kumbh Muktashikham at the top of Sri Sringeri Sarada Vidya Kendra, Chembur, Bombay, May 8, 1992.

Bottom: His Holiness performing arati with devotees at the top of the Kendra.



His Holiness consecrating the icon of Sri Ganesa at Sarada Vidya Kendra, May 8.
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H. H. doing puja to Sri Saradamba at Sarada Vidya Kendra on the opening day.
COURTESY: SUPERSONIC ELECTRONICS LTD., 807-8, Hunghom
Commercial Centre, Tower-A, Ma Tau Wai Road, Hunghom, Kowloon,
Hong Kong. Telex: 35224 SUPER HX. Fax: (852) 7642489.



His Holiness during puja of Adi Sankara at the Sarada Vidya Kendra on the consecration day.
COURTESY: VITAL IMPACT LTD., Room 1616A, Star House, 3 Salisbury Road, Tsin Sha Tsui, Kowloon,
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His Holiness performing abhisheka to Lord Narasimha on Narasimha Jayanti day.

COURTESY: M. ARUNACHALAM, DIRECTOR, POLMACO (HK) LTD., 902, China Building, 29 Queen's Road C., Hong Kong. Telex: 73113 POLMA HX.



His Holiness with ritviks who performed Sahasra Chandi homa in Bombay.

His Holiness visited the Tattvāloka office at Nariman Point, Bombay, on May 17. Here he is seen with the members of the editorial board.



Top: His Holiness honouring President R. Venkataraman with a shawl during his visit to Sringeri, March 4.
 Bottom: President R. Venkataraman and his wife with His Holiness at Sringeri.

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॥ लक्ष्मीनृसिंह पंचरत्नम् ॥

Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Pancharatnam

H. H. SRI CHANDRASEKHARA BHARATI

लक्ष्मी वदन कंजात भानवे भानुतेजसे ।

प्रह्लाद पोषकायास्तु लक्ष्मी नृहरये नमः ॥ १ ॥

1. Like the Sun quickening the lotuses to blossom, Narasimha brings joy to his consort, Lakshmi. Obeisance to Lakshmi Narasimha, shining like the bright Sun and a tower of strength to Prahlada.

क्षीयन्ते सर्वकर्माणि छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

यस्मिन्दृष्टे परे तत्त्वे तस्मै नृहरये नमः ॥ २ ॥

2. I bow to Lakshmi Narasimha, the Supreme Reality, realising whom all doubts vanish and all obligations fall off.

नृणां हृत्स्तम्भनाशाय व्यापिताबोधनाय च ।

स्तम्भं भित्त्वा पुरो योभूतस्मै श्रीविष्णवे नमः ॥ ३ ॥

3. Obeisance to Vishnu who appeared suddenly from the broken pillar to quell the pride of mortals and to show his all-pervasiveness.

सिंहसंहननं सिन्धोःसुधाया मध्यवासिनम् ।

त्र्यक्षं प्रसन्नवदनं लक्ष्मीनरहरिं स्तुमः ॥ ४ ॥

4. The man-lion dwells in the midst of nectarine sea. Let us extoll Narasimha of pleasant face with three eyes.

हरन्तं भक्त वृन्दानां दुरितं स्मृतिमात्रतः ।

स्वसायुज्यं प्रदातारं श्रीमन्तं विष्णुमाश्रये ॥ ५ ॥

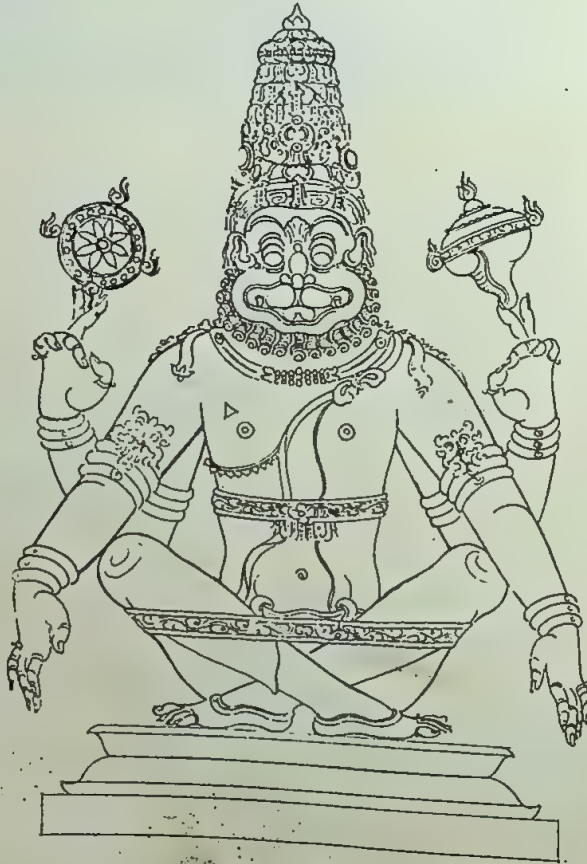
5. Let us surrender unto Vishnu who destroys devotees' ills by mere remembrance of him and grants them the supreme bliss of union.

पंचकं नारसिंहस्य भक्त्या प्रपठतां रमा ।

श्रियं विद्यां सदारोग्यं धर्मात्मत्वं प्रयच्छतु ॥ ६ ॥

6. Whoever recites this pentad with fervour and joy, will be blessed with all wealth, erudition and unfailing health, by Sri Narasimha, an embodiment of righteousness.

Translated into English by M. V. B. S. Sarma.



Yoga Narasimha

Part Four

A Celestial Court Case

R. KRISHNASWAMY AIYAR

The story of Prahlada and Hiranyakasipu as
told by an advocate.

Hiranyakasipu vs. Prahlada and another

I

Plaint

In the Court of the District Judge, Sacchidanandapura

Original Suit No. 1 of 1930

Hiranyakasipu...Plaintiff

D1: Prahlada

D2: Narasimha

Defendants

Plaint under Order VII, Rule 1, CPC

1. Plaintiff performed severe penance and got from Brahma the boon of invulnerability, made Daityapuri his capital, and was emperor of the three worlds.

The second defendant became the enemy of the plaintiff and wanted to destroy him. Coming to know that D1 worshipped D2 as God, plaintiff advised D1 not to associate with D2.

2. Ignoring the precept, "Honour thy father and mother", D1 began to praise the exploits of D2, repeat his name day and night and did not pay the regard due to plaintiff as a father.

Considering his relationship, however, plaintiff again advised D1 that D2 and his association with him would only result in evil consequen-

ces, that D2's name should not be uttered in his hearing that he (the plaintiff) was the true God and there was no one else whom he should adore. D1 paid no heed to this, but still persisted in associating with D2.

By virtue of the duties that he owed D1 as a parent, the plaintiff scolded and chastised him.

One day D1 called D2 to his aid and they arranged that D2 should be in hiding inside a pillar with a hideous mask. In pursuance of the conspiracy, D2 broke loose from his place of concealment and suddenly attacked the plaintiff, broke his ribs and garlanded himself with his entrails and commenced a weird dance. He also enjoined plaintiff to be his door-keeper.

3. Thus injured in body and sore at heart, plaintiff has lost the power to enjoy all earthly pleasures and has become the slave of D2. But for the act of D2, plaintiff would have continued to enjoy all happiness and be the ruler of the three worlds.

4. Plaintiff has repeatedly been asking D2 to restore his body and his kingdom. D2 has been constantly evading him.

5. This suit has been filed by plaintiff for recovery of his body in *status quo ante* and his sovereignty over the three worlds.

6. It is therefore prayed that the Court may be pleased to decree that his body and his dominion over the three worlds be restored to plaintiff, and also order the defendants to pay plaintiff his costs of the suit and grant such further relief as in the circumstances of the case the Court may deem fit to grant.

II

Written Statement of the Defendants Under Order VIII, Rule 1 C.P.C.

1. Plaintiff's claim is false and unsustainable.

2. In any form of government, it is the duty of the ruler to protect the lives of his subjects as his own and prevent any harm being done to them. If such ruler offends against this and acts waywardly, D2 has the inherent right to put an end to such a state of affairs and set things right.

3. Plaintiff was an autocratic ruler, with no thought that there was one above him, whom he should obey. His will was deemed to be the law; he oppressed the

Devas, Rshis and his subjects. It is true that D2 destroyed plaintiff's body. He did so as of right.

4. The allegations in para 4 of the plaint are not true. The suit is barred by limitation.

5. The first defendant has been unnecessarily impleaded in the suit. No relief has been claimed against him.

6. It is prayed that the suit may be dismissed with costs.

III

Judgment

1. Plaintiff is the father of the first defendant. He has brought this suit for the recovery of his body in *status quo ante* and his dominion over the three worlds, alleging that the second defendant has maimed the first, and taken possession of the other.

2. The defendants have raised several objections, on a consideration of which the following issues have been framed.

(a) Whether plaintiff is a *Lokesvara*, and is entitled to get back his sovereignty? (b) Whether plaintiff oppressed his subjects? (c) Whether the second defendant has the right to punish plaintiff? (d) Whether the suit is barred by limitation? (e) Whether the first defendant is a necessary party to the suit? (f) To what relief is plaintiff entitled?

3. Issues 1 to 3: Plaintiff performed severe penance, and *Brahma* granted him several boons. Puffed up with pride, plaintiff subjugated the three worlds and usurped the functions of *Indra*, *Agni*, *Yama*, *Vāruna*, *Vayu* and

others. This led him to commit all excesses, including the five *Mahapatakas*.

While thus engaged, one day he questioned his son D1 what lessons he had learnt from his teacher. D1 began: "I bow to the great God Narayana who creates all the worlds, nourishes them and ultimately destroys them; who is the *Antaratma* of all created things, who is omnipresent, etc."

Enraged at this unexpected answer, plaintiff addressed his son thus, "While I am Lokeshvara, where is the room for another Parameshvara? Henceforth do not speak highly of another in my presence." But D1 continued, "D2 is the protector not only of myself, but of all the worlds. He is everywhere."

4. After this colloquy between father and son, plaintiff oppressed D1 in various ways and even tried to kill him. But for D2's timely help, D1 would have certainly perished.

5. Plaintiff has thus made himself Lokeshvara. He cannot claim relief in a court of law for recovering what he had originally secured by unlawful and unrighteous means.

6. As plaintiff was full of *rakshasatva*, D2 made short work of him and set up the kingdom of the true God. D2 has by his ten *avatars* acquired the prescriptive right to punish wrong-doers.

7. Further, it is an elementary proposition that once the physical body is destroyed, no one can get back the same.

8. Plaintiff speaks disparagingly of D2's right to create, protect, destroy. In the field of ignorance,

the cycle of birth and death gives rise to grief; not so in the field of knowledge. Both birth and death are natural and indispensable for the world's maintenance.

9. I find issues 1 to 3 against the plaintiff.

10. In view of the above findings, issue 4 does not arise for consideration.

11. Issue 5: The domination which the plaintiff has been enjoying before his downfall has now come into the possession and enjoyment of the first defendant. In the event of a decree being passed in favour of the plaintiff, it has to be recovered from the first defendant, a necessary party to the suit. I find this issue in the affirmative.

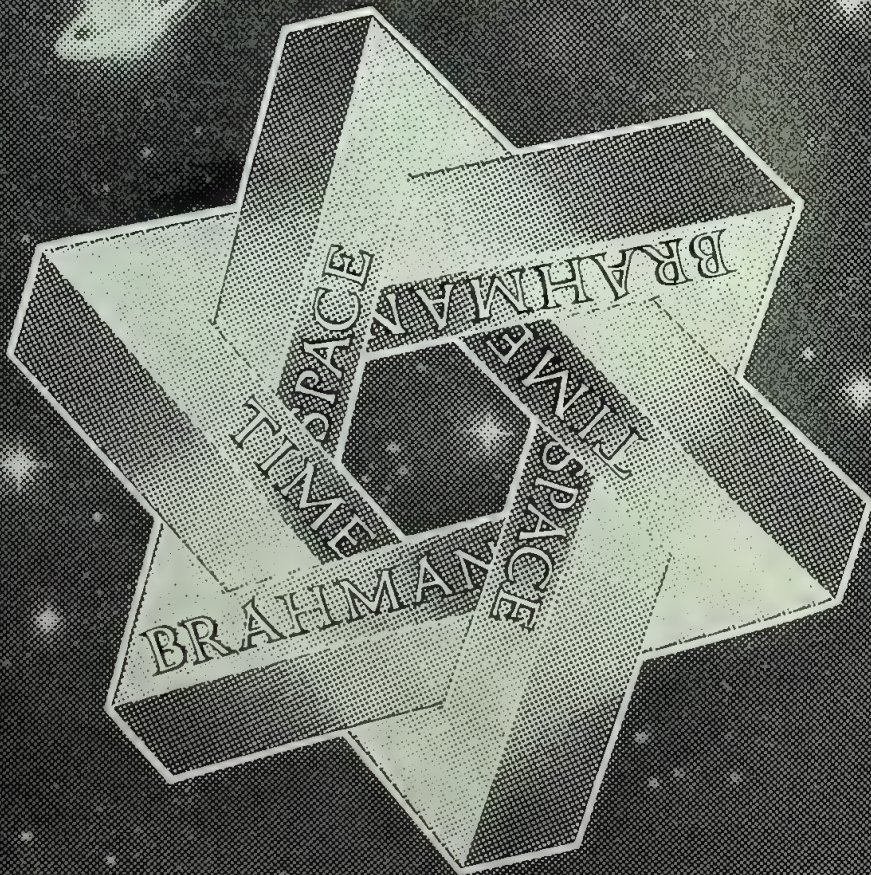
12. Issue 6: Plaintiff has brought this suit without adequate grounds. This Court receives no fee for meting out justice. So, no costs have been incurred by either party. But defendants must be compensated for being unnecessarily dragged into this Court. Plaintiff will make amends by tendering them an apology which he will do in a week's time.

Pronounced by me in open Court by dictation to the shorthand writer, this the 9th day of December, 1930.

Akhanda Paripurnam,
District Judge

R. Krishnaswamy Aiyar, an advocate who became a sannyasin, wrote this imaginary piece of a divine judgment on Hiranyakasipu. This article is reprinted from TATTVĀLOKA VOL. XI No. 2, June-July 1988.

The space-time Brahman



This is perhaps how a 'Modern Vedantin' would describe Brahman. But what's the connection between space-time and Brahman?

Says Louis De Broglie :

"In space-time, everything which for each of us constitutes the past, the present and the future, is given en bloc... Each observer, as his time passes, discovers, so to speak, new slices of space-time which appear to him as successive aspects of the material world, though in reality the ensemble of events constituting space-time exist prior to his knowledge of them".

Says Svetasvatara Upanishad :

... Universe is a union of the manifest and the unmanifest; the temporal and the eternal... when the soul realizes this divine unity, it is freed from every tie. And thereby does it attain release.

See the similarity? Modern physics unifies space and time into a four-dimensional continuum, in which an event can stretch in any direction. This is as opposed to the everyday experience of viewing events as temporal sequences, in a succession of space-time sections.

And Vedanta shows the various forms of going beyond the ordinary experience of time and of freeing oneself from the chain of cause and effect. In understanding natural phenomena, Vedanta, like relativistic physics, has been a liberation from time.

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Sri Veetrirundha Perumal Temple at Tirumazhisai

HARI K. MURTHI

This temple of Maha Vishnu in a rare sitting posture tucked in a tiny hamlet in Tamil Nadu has attracted many devotees and fulfilled their wishes.

There is nothing else besides Me, Arjuna. Like clusters of yarn-beads formed by knots on a thread, all this is threaded on Me. Arjuna, I am the sapidity in water and the light in the moon and the sun; I am the sacred syllable Om in all the Vedas, the sound in ether, and the manliness in men.

Bhagavad Gita VII.7-8.

It is the Lord Vishnu who is the ever-existing divinity, from the tiniest atom to the biggest planet, who is the primal cause and source for the existence of all the sentient and insentient. He is the protector who took *avatar* as Lord Narasimha. He is also the guiding godhood to emancipate us from our first bondage i.e., birth and its train of all joys and woes of this worldliness.

There are many important places of pilgrimage, or temples dedicated to Lord Vishnu or his incarnations, which attract a number of devotees all the year around. Sri Veetrirundha Perumal Temple at Tirumazhisai is one such ancient attraction.

The Temple Location

The temple town of Tirumazhisai is about 25 km from Madras. It is situated on the Tiruvallur High Road and just one km away from Madras-Bangalore trunk road. This town has a history which extends back to several centuries.

Traditionally, the idols of Lord Vishnu are either in a reclining posture (e.g. Srirangam) or in a standing posture (e.g. Tirupati). However, the *moolavar* (prime deity) is seen here in a sitting posture with his consorts on either side. This is unique. The *Sthalapurana*, or record of the place, states:

When the great sages Brighu and Markandeya performed *tapas* in Puri and longed for divine vision, Lord Vishnu appeared only hazily and that too in half form. Pressed for a fuller vision, he indicated that he would do so only in "Maheesara Kshetram".

The sages then prayed to Lord Brahma to identify this sacred place. Lord Brahma found from Lord Vishnu that this could easily be

identified since it would outweigh the rest of the world by at least one grain of paddy.

He also learnt that this *kshetram* was the place where Lord Vishnu would give *darsan* with his consort, Sri Shenbagavalli. Lord Brahma, acting on these instructions, located this *kshetram* when he saw Lord Vishnu in this posture at Tirumazhisai.

This temple is the location where Lord Brahma obtained *darsan* of Lord Vishnu with all his regalia and in full splendour. Here Lord Vishnu is seen with his consort. He also indicates with his fingers that this *kshetram* outweighs the rest of the world by a grain of paddy. This temple is the very spot where Lord Brahma had his *darsan* of Lord Vishnu.

Here Lord Vishnu grants *darsan* with Ashtalakshmis--four Lakshmis on the crown on all four sides, two Lakshmis on the chest and also two Lakshmis i.e., Sridevi and Bhudevi on either side.

The worship of Ashtalakshmi in this temple is always accompanied by the worship of Lord Vishnu, so that the devotee's life may become more sublime and enriched.

It is believed that in the beginning of *Kaliyuga* Sri Venkatesa

Perumal of Tirupati had given his *darsan* to Brahma in this town in this sitting posture and ever since then he is showering his blessings, boons and benefits to all the devotees who go there to have a glimpse of him. **The Temple-complex**

This temple is in the middle of the town. There are rock edicts to show that the temple has been patronised by kings of the Chola dynasty. References to this temple are also found in the palm leaves of Sarasvati Mahal Library at Tanjore.

Adjoining the main shrine in the temple, there is a newly-built shrine for Vinaya Anjaneya Swamy facing the north; he is called Varahamukha. A spacious *mandap* has been built for the convenience of the devotees. This Anjaneya is a *varaprasadi* who fulfills the wishes of devotees. Regular and devoted worship has reduced the various kinds of sufferings of many persons. People narrate positive results experienced as a result of praying at this shrine.

At the entrance to the main temple stands a tall idol of Anjaneya Swamy carrying the Sanjeevi Parvat. This has an imposing and inviting appearance in the cosy little village.



News and Events

New Sarada Temple for Bombay

K. K. SANKARAN

Nestling amidst thick green foliage is the newly-consecrated Rs. 1.15 crore Sarada-Ganesa-Adi Sankara temple complex in Bombay's suburban Chembur, built by the Sri Sringeri Sarada Vidya Kendra.

Undeterred by a 'bandh' in the city, devotees congregated in their thousands to witness the *kumbhabhishekam* on May 8, 1992, performed by His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Bharati Tirtha Swamiji, the 36th Sankaracharya to adorn the Sringeri Sarada Pitham.

Many devotees came trekking long distances to be in time for the *Muhoorta--Vrishbha Lagna*: 7.30 a.m. to 8 a.m.; thousands stayed back in Chembur overnight, and a good many came by cars and other available vehicles before the 'bandh' began at 6 a.m.

At the appointed hour, the Jagadguru, after his arrival was announced by criers and heralded by insignia-bearing *brahmacharins*, came down from his abode on the second floor of the temple, amidst the chanting of Vedas and the playing of *nadaswaram*.

The Three Deities

This was the signal for the beginning of the eagerly-awaited

kumbhabhishekam. The first *abhishekam* was for Sri Ganesa. The curtain before the deity was drawn aside and the Jagadguru performed the *abhisheka* for the exquisitely beautiful *murti* with waters from many sacred *tirthas*. After the *arati*, the Jagadguru moved on to the Adi Sankara shrine and once again the curtain was pulled aside and *abhisheka* and *puja* performed.

Sri Saradambal, the central deity of the temple complex, was the next *murti* to be bathed with sacred waters. All the deities are made of *panchaloha* (five metals), and their installation was preceded by many rites such as *jaladhivasa* (being kept in water) and *dhanyadhivasa* (being kept in repose immersed in foodgrains).

The entire four-hour sacred ceremony was watched by thousands of people both inside the temple and outside, thanks to the close-circuit colour TVs, thoughtfully provided by the organisers at many vantage points, besides two giant screens on which also the proceedings inside were projected.

The Roof-top Kalasas

The *kumbhabhisheka* to the deities over, the Jagadguru did the *abhisheka* and *puja* to the golden *kalasa*

atop the white-marble roof of each shrine--Ganesa, Sarada and Adi Sankara in that order.

A helicopter dipped low to shower rose petals on the *kalasas* as the *kumbhabhisheka* was in progress.

A speciality of the temple is that those inside the temple can see the deities as well as the central golden *kalasas* atop the shrines. Devotees can also have an unhindered *darsan* of the deities from the road in front of the temple.

The *kumbhabhishekam* concluded with the *abhishekam* to the five *kalasas* on the top of the 13.5 meter-high (70 ft.) *rajagopuram* at the entrance of the temple.

The Temple Building

It strikes a visitor to the temple that the front parapet walls and pillars are clad in shining black granite; the central hall, which can seat a thousand people, is paved with shining red granite stones, and the three shrines are all of white marble.

Black symbolises *tamas* (darkness or grief), red denotes *rajas* (passionate activity) and white stands for *sattva* (peace and tranquillity.) A devotee is expected to cast away all his gloom at the very entrance, be calm in the central hall, having freed himself from the fret and fever of life, and gain peace of mind and inner poise after worshipping the deities.

Running commentaries in Hindi, Marathi, Tamil and English were given during the consecration ceremony, giving the genesis of the temple and the significance of the *kumbhabhishekam* by which *prana pratishtha* is done. It means divine

energy is infused in the deities which acquire *chaitanya*.

Special arrangements had been made for serving sumptuous *prasada* to the devotees on the consecration day and on several other days.

Arrival of His Holiness

The 41-year-old Jagadguru who was visiting Bombay for the first time after becoming the Sringeri Sarada Pithadhipati in 1989, arrived in the city from Lonavala at sundown on April 30, 1992. He was taken in a procession from the R. K. Studios upto the temple complex which is adjacent to the Acharya Udyan, also known as Diamond Garden.

In the vanguard of the procession were a chariot drawn by seven white horses, two caparisoned elephants and several groups of singing, dancing and instrument-playing groups. People, several rows deep, lined up the route to have a glimpse of the Jagadguru who was seated on the top of a decorated sedan car. A group of pundits chanting Veda *mantras* moved in front of the Acharya.

On arrival at the temple complex, the Jagadguru first offered obeisance to Sri Hanuman, the principal deity of the Junna Hanuman Mandir in the very compound of which the Sarada temple complex has been built.

Public Address

The Acharya was given a public address inscribed in a *tamra patra* (copper plate) framed in an ornate stand. In his first address, delivered in chaste Tamil, the Acharya said

the temple was a dream come true of his guru, H. H. Sri Abhinava Vidya Theertha Swamiji who, during his visit to Bombay in 1982, had expressed a pious wish that a Sarada temple be built in Bombay.

Sri Bharati Tirtha Swamiji congratulated Sri T. S. Natarajan, President of Sri Sringeri Sarada Vidya Kendra, and the innumerable devotees who had worked with him, on raising in Bombay such a magnificent temple which was bound to become a great seat of learning. An Indological library is attached to the temple with facilities for research scholars to pursue their studies. The temple architect Sri V. Sundareswaran, who rendered free service, also came in for high praise.

Sankara Jayanti

For five days from May 3 to May 7, a special Sankara Jayanti programme was conducted, the highlight of which was a *Vidvat Sadas* presided over by the Jagadguru. Eminent scholars and devotees who gave talks on Adi Sankara and his works in different languages included Mahamandaleswara Swami Kashikanandaji Maharaj, Prof. (Mm.) J. J. Dave, Acharya Bhaishanker Purohit, Justice Sri Krishna of the Bombay High Court, Prof. S. M. Bhatkande, Prof. S. A. Upadhyaya, Prof. S. B. Velankar, Pt. Vasantrao Gadgil, Prof. M. D. Paradkar, Prof. K. P. Jog and Sri K. K. Sankaran.

On the concluding day, pundits who had come from many parts of the country began Vedic chanting for the *prana pratishtha* ceremony to

be held on the *kumbhabhishekam* day, May 8. All the scholars were honoured suitably by the Jagadguru, who spoke on Adi Sankara's teachings after performing the *kanakabhishekam* to the *murti* of Adi Sankara. A procession of Adi Sankara was later taken out.

Atirudra

For seven days from May 10 to May 16, an *Atirudra Yajna* was conducted in a specially put up *shamiana* at the nearby AFEC School premises, during which Sri Rudra *mantra* was chanted 14,641 times by Ritwiks, and a tenth part of it accompanied by Havana. A beautiful image of Uma Mahesvara cast in plaster of paris adorned the dais. *Dampati puja*, *mangalarati* and *pradakshina* of the *Homa Kunda* by devotees marked the end of the event. On the day, 121 Vedic pandits were honoured by the Jagadguru.

Chandi Yajna

Then followed, from May 18 to May 22, a *Sahasrachandi Yajna* at the same venue, during which 700-verse *Durga Saptasati* also known as *Devi Mahatmya* was recited 1000 times by Ritwiks.

Durga Saptasati invokes the blessing of Mother Durga to ward off all evils afflicting the people and to bestow peace and plenty. The *poornahuti* on May 22, was performed in the presence of the Jagadguru. On the same evening addresses of welcome to the Jagadguru were presented in various languages at a public reception. The Acharya gave a discourse on *dharma* in Hindi. ●

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Creative Powers of the Tulasi

Of all plants, the Tulasi is the most sacred. The Tulasi plant is tended with great love and reverence by the Hindus.

In the morning, Hindus place a glass of water with Tulasi leaves in their prayer room as prasad (offering to the deity), which they consume after finishing their prayers. Till then, they fast.

Nowadays doctors advise us to have a glass of water first thing in the morning. Recent scientific studies have shown that a glass of water with Tulasi leaves taken in the morning on empty stomach cleanses and purifies the whole body.

It is considered very auspicious to go around the Tulasi. For ladies this ritual has a very beneficial effect. When they go around the Tulasi plant, they inhale the air full of Tulasi fragrance, which cleanses their system making it easier for them to conceive a child.

Many are the unique curative powers of Tulasi. The Tulasi leaves have medicinal properties for destroying worms and malaria germs, and stopping vomiting. They are good for those suffering from Asthma.

There are two types of Tulasi, the black and the white. The black variety is known as the Krishna Tulasi, while the white is the Rama Tulasi.

Tulasi is beneficial for various physical disorders. The leaves may be crushed to a fine power in a clean vessel or dried under a shade. The juice can also be taken. Since the leaves are slightly bitter and astringent they may be taken with the help of honey or curd—but never with milk.

It should be taken in the morning on empty stomach followed by breakfast after 30 minutes. Normally it is taken once but it may be taken twice or thrice times in acute conditions.

There are no particular restrictions during its treatment. However, very pungent food should be avoided.

1. For malaria fever, 5-7 leaves mixed with powdered black pepper may be taken.

2. Ten grams of Tulasi juice mixed with ten grams of ginger juice will remove pain in joints.

3. Tulasi seed mixed with curd or honey stops vomiting in children.

4. Black Tulasi juice mixed with powdered black pepper and oil (ghee)

removes gastric troubles.

5. 25 grams of Tulasi juice with two grams of black salt if taken four days destroys worms.

✕ 6. Black Tulasi (5 -25 grams) mixed in honey cures asthmatic complaints.

7. Black Tulasi water mixed with vinegar (same amount) and butter is beneficial in treating eczema conditions.

8. Tulasi leaves heated in water used as a drug cures ear ache.

9. For people suffering from sore throat, gargling with ten grams of black Tulasi boiled in half kg. water helps.

10. Black Tulasi leaves mixed with seven almonds and four cardamoms (powdered) is good for indigestion.

11. Black Tulasi leaves mixed with honey (same amount) applied to the eyes, cures blurredness.

12. Rub black Tulasi juice (few drops) on the hands and feet of a person who has fainted.

13. For excessive saliva in the mouth black Tulasi leaves should be chewed.

14. Recent scientific research studies have shown that ten Tulasi leaves taken daily prevents and cures diabetes.

For daily health one should regularly drink three leaves of Tulasi juice mixed with five pieces of black pepper every morning.

(Extracts from "Hindu Customs and Beliefs" by Shakun Narain.)

The Power of Concentration



Ahalya, the wife of a great king, fell madly in love with an ordinary

man called Indra. The matter reached the king's ears. It became a public scandal.

The king was shocked. He ordered that the couple be put through various cruel tortures. But neither of them was affected by the tortures. Their faces did not even show a twitch of pain. They were blissfully smiling at each other.

The king was totally baffled. He asked them what was the secret of their strength and resistance.

They said, "We are so engrossed with each other that our mind has no room for any other thoughts. So far as we are concerned, we two alone exist, each for the other. Nothing else exists. How then can we be affected by anything?"

Moral: Such is the power of mind. By the force of concentration on one thing, all else will cease to exist.

Change Yourself before Changing Others

A king was suffering from jaundice. The doctor advised him to see only green things.

The king ordered that the entire kingdom should be painted green. The people were in a dilemma. They did not know what to do.

The people then approached the wise Prime Minister and asked him what they should do. The Prime Minister thought over the problem and



came up with a wonderful solution.

The Prime Minister approached the king the next day and told him, "Your Majesty, I have a better solution. Instead of painting the kingdom green, why don't you put on spectacles with green glasses?"

The King took his advice. By putting on green glasses, the king could see all things green.

Complete Surrender

Once a guru and his disciple were walking together.

On the way, the guru told the disciple, "Wait here. I shall soon return." Saying thus, the guru went away.



Rooted to the spot stood the disciple, expecting his guru any moment. Hours passed, days passed, months passed, years passed. The disciple did not move from the spot. He waited patiently, his mind focused on the guru.

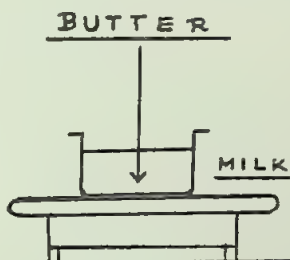
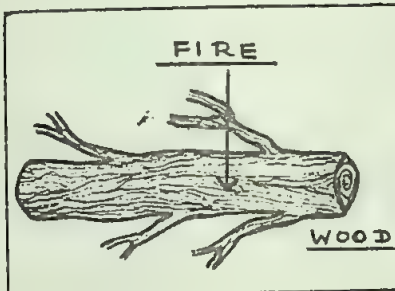
The one-pointed meditation grew into vision. The disciple experienced supreme peace, bliss and love.

Twelve years later, the guru returned to the same spot. The moment the guru saw his disciple, he understood that the disciple had realised the Ultimate Reality. By completely surrendering to his guru, the disciple had become one with the guru, and attained liberation.

Answers to Find the Word:

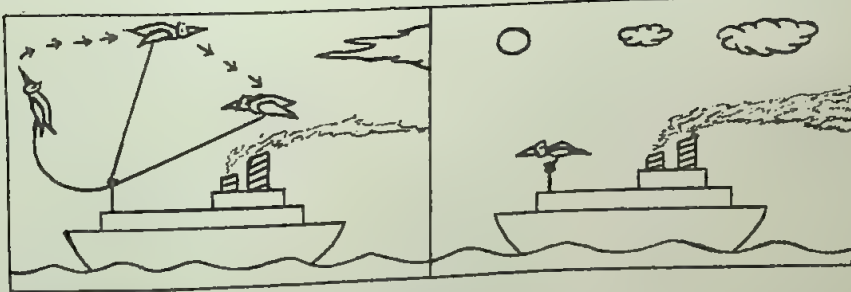
1. Adi Shankara 2. Ramakrishna 3. Kabir 4. Surdas 5. Mirabai
6. Chaitanya 7. Namdev 8. Gurunanak 9. Vivekananda 10. Ramdas
11. Vidyaranya 12. Valmiki 13. Tulsidas 14. Christ 15. Eknath.

Golden Words



Just as fire is hidden in wood and butter in milk, God dwells within everything in the cosmos, but due to ignorance we are unaware of his divine presence.

Katha Upanishad



An eagle tied by a cord, flying hither and thither and finding no other resting place, comes to rest where he is tied.

Likewise, a man's mind, flying hither and thither and finding no other resting place, eventually comes to rest in Brahman, for mind is bound by Brahman.

Chandogya Upanishad

Find the Word

Given below are names of 15 great saints. Can you find them out?

1	— D —	S	— A — — A — —
2	— — — A —	R	— — — — A
3	— A —	° i	—
4		S	— — — — A —
5	— — —	R	— — — A —
6	— H —	° i	— A — — — —
7		N	— — — — E —
8		G	— — — / — A — — — —
9	— I —	E	— — — — A — — A
10		R	— — — — A —
11		° i	— — — — A — — — — A
12	— A —	M	— — — — ° i
13		U	— — — — ° i — — — —
14	— — — R — — —	T	
15	— K — — —	T	—

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REFLECTIONS ON THE SELF & SOUL

The wise should surrender speech in
mind. Mind in the knowing self.
The knowing self in the spirit of the
universe. And the spirit of the
universe in the spirit of peace.



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